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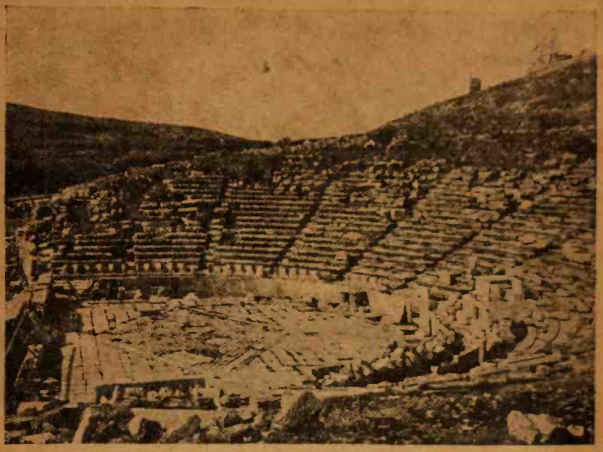

SOPHOCLES
ANTIGONE

Translated by
R. WHITELAW

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WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

Oxford University Press
London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen
New York Toronto Melbourne Cape Town
Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai
Humphrey Milford Publisher to the UNIVERSITY

Impression of 1924
First edition, 1906

Printed in England

PREFACE

The masterpieces of our national classics are now happily subjects of study wherever instruction in the humanities is given. There is probably no good school, public or private, in England in which a play of Shakespeare or a book of the *Faerie Queene* or of *Paradise Lost* is not included in the curriculum, and generally no doubt with the happiest results. In some cases such studies, degenerating into cram-work, may have failed to effect what it was hoped they would effect, but as a rule their record has certainly not been failure. An intelligent appreciation of good literature and a genuine interest in it have been created; liberal curiosity has been awakened, and very many boys and girls annually leave our schools both fitted and anxious to extend their reading and explore for themselves the authors to whom they have been introduced. All this has been the result of the salutary reforms of the last fifteen or twenty years.

Up to the present time the chief, and indeed in most schools the only, medium of literary as distinguished from linguistic teaching has been

our own literature; and that our own literature should be the chief medium for such instruction is, for obvious reasons, both natural and desirable. But is it not equally desirable that the sphere of such instruction should now be extended, especially if it can be shown that by such an extension the students of our own and of modern literature generally would be gainers, and that such an extension would be practicable? Of this we may be quite sure, that a boy or girl who can be interested in a play of Shakespeare, will, if placed in a position to understand it, be equally interested in a judiciously selected play of one of the Attic masters, nay, would probably find more attraction in such epics as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* than in the *Faerie Queene* and in *Paradise Lost*.

When we remember the educational value from a moral and sentimental point of view, the deep interest and attractiveness on the human and dramatic side, and above all the historical importance, in the fullest sense of the term, of the Greek masterpieces, can there be two opinions about the desirableness of including them in all our school courses of liberal studies? So essentially, indeed, does the influence of the mythology and poetry of ancient Greece penetrate our own classical literature, verse and prose alike, that a reader who has no ac-

quaintance with them is not only unable critically to understand either its evolution or its characteristics, but is perpetually at a loss to follow its commonest references and allusions. He is arrested at every step. No one, surely, could question that some acquaintance with that mythology and poetry is as indispensable to an intelligent study of our national classics from Chaucer to Tennyson, as the letters of the alphabet are to a written sentence. Of all intelligent literary study the basis must rest on some acquaintance with Greek tradition: turn where we will it confronts us; its presence, particularly in our poetry, is simply ubiquitous. And to say that at least an introduction to it should be regarded as part of the equipment of every decently educated boy and girl, even of the Board School or High School grade, is to say what probably few educationists would dispute. This information could be easily, as well as most pleasantly, imparted. The prescription of even a single Greek play or a book or two of Homer in translation would, with appropriate commentary by a competent teacher, go a long way towards supplying it. Even where the original is taught such translations, if prescribed as collateral studies, could scarcely fail to lighten and vivify the drudgery necessarily involved,

particularly at the earlier stages, in acquiring so difficult a language as ancient Greek.

Nor surely is there any reason why translations of the chief Greek masterpieces, when such translations are of themselves of classical excellence, should not, if properly introduced and annotated, be admitted side by side with the dramas of Shakespeare as textbooks in our courses of school study. Why, it may be asked, should not a student substitute for one of two plays of Shakespeare offered for examination a Greek play in an approved translation?

But it is not in schools and educational institutions only that such an introduction to the study of the only drama and epic which rival our own would be appropriate. To the general reader and to the vast number of literary students whose studies are guided by the University Extension lectures and the National Home Reading Union it would, I venture to think, be equally appropriate. It is with the hope that such a scheme may find favour with those who direct and regulate secondary and popular education, that the present volume and the similar edition of Euripides' *Alcestis* have been prepared; should they prove to be acceptable it is proposed to follow them with others.

INTRODUCTION

I

Life of Sophocles

Sophocles, who may with peculiar propriety be called the Shakespeare of the Attic stage, was born most probably in B. C. 495, five years before the battle of Marathon, so that he was some thirty years younger than Aeschylus and some fifteen years older than Euripides. His father's name was Sophilus or Sophillus, for it is spelt in both ways, and he is said to have been, according to one authority, a carpenter or smith, according to another, a sword-maker; by which no doubt we are to understand that he was a master in those trades employing labour, not himself an artisan. It is certain that he must have been wealthy and highly respectable, for his son received the best and most expensive education possible for an Athenian citizen, and served the state in offices which at that time would never have been filled by men of plebeian birth. He was born at Colonus, a deme or village situated about a mile and a quarter to the north-west of Athens, a place now arid and bare and without any charm or distinction, but at that time memorable alike for its natural

beauties and for its associations. The Chorus in which the poet celebrated these beauties is justly famous: he wrote it, so tradition says, in old age, not long before his death.

Stranger in this land of goodly steeds, thou hast come to earth's fairest home, even to our white Colonus; where the nightingale, a constant guest, trills her clear note in the covert of green glades, dwelling amid the wine-dark ivy and the god's inviolate bowers, rich in berries and fruit, unvisited by sun, unvexed by wind of any storm: where the reveller Dionysus ever walks the ground, companion of the nymphs that nursed him. And fed of heavenly dew the narcissus blooms morn by morn with fair clusters, crown of the Great Goddesses from of yore, and the crocus blooms with golden beam. Nor fail the sleepless founts whence the waters of Cephisus wander, but each day with stainless tide he moveth over the plains of the land's swelling bosom for the giving of quick increase: nor hath the Muses' choir quite abhorred this place, nor Aphrodite of the golden rein.[1]

It was a meet birthplace for a poet pre-eminently distinguished by the fervour of his patriotism and the tenacious conservatism of his religious sentiment. From the hill on which it stood could be seen the temples of Athens, the Acropolis, the Parthenon and the Areiopagus. Within its precincts was the sanctuary of its tutelary deity Poseidon Hippius; to the north of that was the

[1] *Oedipus at Colonus*, 668-93 (Jebb's version).

hill of Demeter Euchloüs, and to the north-east the Grove of the Eumenides, where the aged Oedipus rested. Not far from these was the hallowed rift where Theseus and Peirithous slew the victims when they made their famous pact. Altars to Athena Hippia and other deities thronged the central area. Close by, to the south, was the Academy with the altar of Prometheus, the altar of the Muses and the altar of Zeus Morius. Of the poet's early days no particulars have survived, except that he excelled in both the chief branches of Greek education, gymnastic and music—music in the Greek sense of the term including not only what we mean by it, but art and polite literature generally—and that he won prizes in both these subjects. His instructor in music was Lamprus, one of the most eminent teachers in Athens. In B. C. 480, when he was in his sixteenth year, a great distinction was conferred on him. He was chosen to lead the Chorus of boys who danced about the trophy, and sang the paean in the festivities which succeeded the victory of Salamis. This honour he no doubt owed partly to the skill with which he had profited from the teaching of Lamprus, and partly to his extraordinary personal beauty.

His first appearance as a dramatist was in B. C. 468, when he won the prize under singular and memorable circumstances. Aeschylus, the representative of the older school of drama, had

long reigned supreme, and had the judges been those who ordinarily decided to whom the prize should be assigned, he would probably not have been superseded by a younger competitor on this occasion. But it happened in this year that at the time of the Greater Dionysian festival—when these competitions were decided—Cimon and his commission had just returned from bringing the bones of Theseus from Scyros for reinterment in Athens. Apsephion the Archon Eponymus, whose duty it was to appoint the judges, had not yet drawn the lots for their selection when Cimon and his nine colleagues entered the theatre to make the customary oblations to Dionysus. It suddenly occurred to Apsephion to impound them and make them the judges. He did so. They gave the first prize to Sophocles, assigning only the second to Aeschylus. Nothing could be more significant than this; indeed it marked an era. The old world was passing away, a new had defined itself. The Athens of Aristides was yielding place to the Athens of Pericles. Of the new world Sophocles became pre-eminently the poet.

For the next twenty-nine years he appears to have reigned practically without a rival, till in B. C. 441 Euripides won in competition with him the first prize, and achieved what proved however to be only a temporary triumph. Of this period of his life no particulars at all have survived, beyond the fact that in the spring of B. C. 441

in all probability, for it is impossible to speak with certainty, he brought out his earliest extant play, the play translated in the present volume. But the year succeeding this was a memorable one in his career. In that year the Athenians sent two expeditions against Samos, for the purpose of putting down the oligarchy which had been established there and setting up a democracy in its place. The first expedition effected this, the second was necessitated by the return of the Samian oligarchs, the destruction of the newly established democracy by them, and their open defiance of the Athenian power. In this second expedition Sophocles took part, having had the very high honour of being elected one of the *Strategi*, as they were called. The *Strategi*, who were ten in number, were officers elected annually at Athens, forming a sort of board of which the duties were mainly military, but in part also civil. The word *Strategos* is usually translated 'general', but we must guard against supposing that it was merely a military office as the word implies in our service. It was a most distinguished public post, to which no mere poet or man of letters without other qualifications and great interest would ever have been elected. The probability is that Sophocles owed it to Pericles, and that what attracted Pericles to the poet was his admiration of the *Antigone*. Such at all events is the tradition, a tradition to which the first Argument

to the play lends some colour. 'They say that Sophocles was appointed to the strategia which he held at Samos, because he had distinguished himself by the production of the *Antigone*.' We may be sure that what would have appealed to those who conferred such a post upon him would not have been the dramatic and aesthetic beauties of the play only. Without going so far as Donaldson, who thinks that the political sentiments expressed in the *Antigone* were intended as a recommendation of Pericles' policy and that Pericles is in various passages referred to personally, we cannot but feel that in its ethics and politics, as well as in its sentiment, there is much which could not have failed to please that great statesman.

At Samos, Sophocles is said to have made the acquaintance of the historian Herodotus, with whom he afterwards became intimate, and to whom we know he wrote a complimentary Ode. And between the two men there must have been much in common. That the Histories of his friend were well known to him seems clear from many passages in his dramas, most of which have been collected by Dean Plumptre in his memoir of Sophocles.[1] Some scholars think that these passages may be resolved into coincidences, and some contend that Herodotus borrowed from

[1] See his Trans. of Sophocles, Introduction, vol. i. lvi–lx.

Sophocles; points which can hardly be settled now.

Of the long period intervening between his return to Athens in B. C. 439 and his death in B. C. 406, very little is known. Some suppose that he again served the state in an important office, and that he is to be identified with the Sophocles who was a member of the Committee of Public Safety, appointed after the destruction of the Athenian forces at Syracuse in B. C. 413. If so, he was in his eighty-third year, and was and had long been incessantly occupied with his dramas and poems, for of the 113 plays assigned to him no less than eighty-one were almost certainly produced during these years. Though a lover of liberty, and disapproving on principle of the establishment of the oligarchical Council of Four Hundred in B. C. 411, he consented to it, because he was of opinion that under the circumstances there was no better course to take. During the rest of his life he had no concern with politics, and is said to have filled the office of priest to a local hero, Halon, the gods granting him—so ran the legend—supernatural revelations.

Before he passed away in extreme old age two incidents occurred which throw light on his singularly beautiful and pleasing character as a man. When the news came to Athens that his brother poet Euripides was dead, and Euripides had for many years been his rival and was anything but

popular in Athens, Sophocles was bringing out a tragedy. That the dead poet might be conspicuously honoured, Sophocles appeared in person on the stage at the head of his Chorus, both he and they being dressed in mourning and without the wreaths which were usually worn, but which on this occasion were reverently laid upon the *thymele*. The other incident concerns his domestic life. He had two sons, one, Iophon, by Nicostrate a free born Athenian woman, and another, Ariston, by another mother, Theoris of Sicyon. By the law of Athens Iophon was the rightful heir. But the old poet was greatly attached to Ariston's son, who had been named after himself. Iophon, fearing that Sophocles would leave the bulk of his property to this young grandson and availing himself of the poet's great age, cited him before certain officers who had jurisdiction in family matters, alleging that his father's mind had become impaired through old age, and that he was not competent to manage his property. The poet is said to have replied, 'If I am Sophocles I am not beside myself, and if I am beside myself I am not Sophocles.' He then proceeded—so goes the story—to read, in proof of his sanity, the magnificent chorus celebrating Colonus, which he had just composed. Many absurd fictions are told about the manner of his death, to which it is not necessary to refer. It probably took place in the spring

of B. C. 406 in the ninetieth or ninety-first year of his age.

By the general consent of antiquity from his contemporaries downwards, Sophocles united in his personal character and temper, as well as in his personal experiences, all that the Greeks summed up in *eudaimonia*, good fortune. 'Dear to the gods as no one else was,' 'loved in every way by all men,' are literal versions of what is said of him by his earliest extant biographer. His long life appears to have been a record of unbroken prosperity. 'Blessed Sophocles'—it was thus that his contemporary Phrynichus wrote of him—'who lived a long life before he died, a fortunate man and accomplished; a maker of many beautiful tragedies, beautiful was his end: no evil had he to endure.' Physically perfect he was from his boyhood upward, distinguished both by the grace and symmetry of his form, and by his skill and strength as a gymnast. As a life, unclouded either by ill-health or reverses, expanded, he proceeded from success to success, from triumph to triumph. Before he had completed his thirtieth year he had superseded in the popular estimate the greatest living dramatist, his master Aeschylus, and had secured a supremacy on the stage destined to be maintained as long as he lived. Scarcely had he reached the prime of life when a higher honour was conferred upon him than had ever been conferred on a poet before; and it

would be no exaggeration to say that from this time till his death he was, with the exception of Pericles while Pericles was alive, the most distinguished citizen in Athens. A fuller life it would be impossible for man to live, for he touched life on all sides. In the politics of his time he took, as we have seen, an active, and on more than one occasion an important, part, and was a trusted counsellor among statesmen. His friendship with Herodotus indicates another side of his interests. How profoundly metaphysics and ethics with what is cognate to them had engaged his attention is abundantly illustrated by his extant dramas and by the fragments of those which have perished. That he was a minute student of nature and of natural history, is equally evident. Like Shakespeare and Goethe he appears to have taken his full share of such pleasures as the world has to offer, and, though we may reject with confidence much which scandalous gossip has recorded, there can be no doubt that his private life was not an austere one. The qualities in his character which tradition most dwells on are his kind and easy temper, his modesty and his piety. Thus the epithet which Aristophanes applies to him is εὔκολος, 'good-tempered'; while a contemporary poet, Ion, gives us a very pleasing glimpse of him when he was on the expedition to Samos, showing how playful and genial he could be. His modesty is illustrated by an anecdote Plutarch tells. Nicias in

a council of war had asked him to give his opinion first as being the eldest of the chief officers present, but Sophocles replied, 'I am indeed the eldest in years but you in counsel': still more strikingly is it illustrated by the charming picture Aristophanes gives of him in the *Frogs*. The epithet εὐσεβέστατος, 'most reverent,' bestowed on him by an ancient commentator on the *Electra* is indicative of much which other traditions corroborate. The reverence and admiration felt for him by his countrymen have found expression in more than one epigram which has come down to us. The most beautiful is the following, which may be quoted in the admirable version given by an anonymous translator in Addison's *Spectator*[1]:

Winde, gentle evergreen, to form a shade
Around the tomb where Sophocles is laid:
Sweet ivy, winde thy boughs and intertwine
With blushing roses and the clustring vine:
Thus will thy lasting leaves, with beauties hung,
Prove grateful emblems of the lays he sung:
Whose soul exalted like a god of wit
Among the Muses and the Graces writ.

The dramatic activity of Sophocles extended over sixty-two years, and 130 dramas were attributed to him. Of these however, according to the most celebrated of the ancient critics, Aristophanes of Byzantium, seventeen were spurious, so that the authentic canon left him with 113.

[1] No. 551.

Of these seven are extant, most of them belonging to the later period of his career. The earliest in point of time is the *Antigone*, brought out most probably in March B. C. 441. Next in order would probably come the *Ajax*, but the date of this play can only be conjectured from internal evidence. Of the *Oedipus Rex* we can only say that it was almost certainly produced between B. C. 439 and B. C. 412, and of the *Electra* that it could not have been produced earlier than B. C. 420. The *Philoctetes* we know was produced late in the March of B. C. 409. Of the *Oedipus at Colonus* all that can be said with any confidence is that it was produced during the latest years of the poet's life, and was in all probability his last drama.

II

The Place of Sophocles among Poets

During the administration of Pericles, which began practically in B. C. 461 and extended to B. C. 430, all that was best in the aristocratic and all that was best in the democratic element, met and blended in the happiest union. Never was progress united with prescription so felicitously and harmoniously in the annals of the world. It was a moment in the history of the human race which may be compared to a flower at the very acme of development, in its fullest, freshest bloom before the least faint symptom of decay is per-

ceptible. In politics, the happiest balance between conservatism and progress: in religion, the happiest balance between the old faith and piety which had their root in imagination, sentiment, and emotion, and the more rational and philosophic faith which has its root in reflective reason: in speculative philosophy, the happiest balance between reverence for tradition and experience, and aggressive curiosity: in art, the exquisite conservation, adjustment and harmony of the elements which predominate in its springtime, and the elements which predominate in its maturity—simplicity, majesty, seriousness, truthfulness—blended with a perfection of form not strained to over elaboration and finish, with grace and refinement not degenerating into affectation and over subtlety, with lightness and abandon not passing into laxity and carelessness. But after the fall of Pericles—that is to say between B. C. 430 and the death of Sophocles in B. C. 406—great and rapid were the changes. In politics a rabble of vulgar demagogues—such scoundrels as Cleon, for example, and the type ridiculed by Aristophanes—turned a rational and moderate into a boisterous and licentious democracy, and Athens became the prey of the multitude. Scepticism and atheism eat into the old religion, and with religion morality also degenerated. One of the most extraordinary features of this extraordinary time is the astounding rapidity with which revolution, revolution religious, moral, intellectual,

social, political, moved. It would be no exaggeration to say that between the expulsion of Hippias in B. C. 510 and the death of Socrates in B. C. 399, Athens passed through a succession of revolutions and changes with reference to politics, ethics, theology and art, unparalled in the history of any other people in the world.

Let us glance for a moment at what the great trio of Athenian dramatists witnessed and reflect in their work. In the world and in the work of Aeschylus, who was born in B. C. 525, we are in the old heroic time when the national religion linked man with the gods through ties of flesh, when the demi-gods were believed in and sincerely worshipped. In the poetry of Aeschylus it is man and God in direct contact, Fate and human will in awful struggle: an austere transcendentalism is the spirit of his creed: all his creations are superhuman. He found the old creeds alive, and he clung to them; he is radically and essentially conservative. In politics he belonged to the aristocratic party of Aristides who was his hero, and whom he upheld in pleading for the prerogative of the Areiopagus. Twenty-five years of age at the battle of Marathon he is in all respects a pre-Marathonian Greek. Sophocles, as we have seen, was in his sixteenth year at the battle of Salamis. His period of later education and activity falls therefore not in the world preceding the Persian war nor in the world of that war, but in the

world of Pericles: it covers that period when the party of Cimon was overthrown by Pericles, and Athens, a limited democracy, was expanding under Pericles. He was in mid career and in full activity when the great city was at its acme of harmonious perfection; he is the poet of the perfect period. His work is distinguished by all that was characteristic of that happy era, and the word which describes it, as far as any one word can do, is harmony. Blending in his imagination the natural and the supernatural, just as in the imagination of his contemporaries it was blended—he stood as it were at the point where faith and reason meet. 'Living,' as Jebb says, 'just when the old religion had shed upon it the greatest strength of intellectual light which it could bear without fading he is perhaps the highest of its votaries, the man for whom more than any other who could be named the old national religion was a self-sufficing and ennobling faith.' In his ethics and in his politics there is the same admirable balance. In the great speech of Pericles, which Thucydides has recorded, he represents that statesman saying: 'Thus genial in our private intercourse, in public things we are kept from lawlessness mainly by fear, obedient to the magistrates of the time and the laws, especially to those laws which are set for the help of the wronged and to those unwritten laws of which the sanction is a tacit shame.' And this is the spirit of Sophocles'

ethical and political teaching, illustrated on the one hand, as Jebb has remarked, by the second Stasimon in the *Antigone*, on the other by the second Stasimon in the *Oedipus Rex*. And so in accordance with this spirit he is not like Aeschylus an oligarchic conservative, nor like Euripides a puzzled democrat, that is a democrat in theory finding democracy in practice a very unsatisfactory institution; but he is not definitely either the one or the other, rather a man who would recognize the idea of free elastic development if only under the restraints of a respected and maintained moral tradition. In coming to Euripides, who was born in B. C. 490 and who was therefore sixteen years younger than Sophocles, we seem to be in another world, because he reflects those sides of the intellectual and spiritual activity of his time, which are not reflected in Sophocles. When he came into prominence the old religion was for many, perhaps for the majority, all but dead. Gods and demi-gods had passed out of the popular creed. Rationalism variously modified, sometimes as downright atheism, more often as simple scepticism and not unfrequently as mere indifference, had now become the vogue. Natural philosophers like Anaxagoras, sophists like Prodicus and Protagoras, and many others who were really disseminating the sort of doctrines and teachings which Socrates was falsely accused of promulgating, were now everywhere busy. Ima-

gination and sentiment were weakening as reason developed.

The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The power, the beauty and the majesty
That had their haunts in dale and puny mountain,
Or forest, by slow stream or pebbly spring,
Or chasm and wat'ry depths—all these had vanished
And lived no longer in the light of reason.

And so Euripides became partly a sophistical realist, partly a sad and perplexed thinker, and partly a poet who found in mere art and in the delineation of human passions and afflictions a substitute for the old inspiration and the old aims.

The poet of the perfect period, that is the phrase for Sophocles. His tragedies are, says Müller, 'a beautiful flower of Attic genius, which could only have sprung up on the boundary line between two ages differing widely in their opinions and mode of thinking.' In him Attic drama may be said to have culminated, as our own Romantic drama culminated in Shakespeare. The parallel, it may be added, between Sophocles and Shakespeare, not only as artists but as philosophers and even personally as men, is extraordinarily close. It cannot, however, be drawn here.[1] The character-

[1] For this parallel see the present writer's essay on 'Sophocles and Shakespeare,' *Studies in Shakespeare*, 127–79.

istics of Sophocles may be succinctly stated thus:

1. As an artist he completed and perfected Attic tragedy by subordinating the lyric portion to the dialogue through the systematic introduction of a third actor;[1] by the regulation of the dialogue through the separation of the *Deuteragonist* from the *Tritagonist*, thus rendering possible the elaborate development of character through opposition and contrast; by making the Chorus the perfection of lyric poetry, and by connecting it with the evolution of the drama not as actively affecting it, but as an ideal spectator, that is as expressing the emotions excited or suggested by the action and as drawing the moral lessons to be derived from it; by developing to its fullest each element in the composition of the drama, the Rheseis (set speeches), the dialectic, the *stasima*, the *kommoi* and *kommatica*, and fusing all

[1] In the Greek tragedies there were not as in ours separate actors for each person in the drama, but the characters were distributed first, as in the earlier plays of Aeschylus, among two actors called respectively the *Protagonist* and the *Deuteragonist*, and secondly, as in Sophocles and in the Theban trilogy of Aeschylus, among three, the third being called the *Tritagonist*. Thus in the *Antigone* the parts of Antigone, Teiresias, and Eurydice were probably played by the *Protagonist*, the parts of Ismene, the Sentinel, Haemon, and the first and second Messenger by the *Deuteragonist*, and the part of Creon by the *Tritagonist*.

into an organic whole, into the perfection of unity and symmetry.

2. So far as the conditions under which he worked and the material which he had to mould admitted of such an innovation, he minimized the Destiny element in his dramas, and endeavoured if not to subordinate the supernatural to the ethical at least to emphasize and bring the ethical into prominence. It is this which differentiates him from Aeschylus and which links him so closely with Shakespeare.

3. His dramas present us, not like those of Euripides with a literal but with an ideal presentation of life, and when he said with reference to Euripides, that Euripides 'drew men as they are, but that he drew them as they ought to be', he gave us the key to his presentation of character. 'The persons of the Sophoclean drama,' says Jebb, 'are at once human and ideal. They are made human by the distinct and continuous portrayal of their chief feelings, impulses and motives. Their ideality is preserved chiefly in two ways; first, the poet avoids too minute a moral analysis, and so each character while its main tendencies are exhibited still remains generic, a type rather than a portrait; secondly, and this is of higher moment, the persons of the drama are ever under the directly manifested, immediately felt control of the gods and of fate.' In this we have another illustration of that balance, that reconcilement of

extremes which is so characteristic of Sophocles. The characters of Aeschylus, with one or two exceptions, are superhuman, rather colossal types than breathing human beings: the characters of Euripides are merely average men and women with nothing superhuman and nothing typical about them. In Sophocles both are blended but the human element predominates.

4. Like Goethe, Sophocles is a consummate artist, and to the requirements of art everything is subdued by him—passion, imagination, reflection, material, aim. And art, as he conceived it, implied not merely the perfection of expression and form, but embraced all that pertains to the interpretation and discipline of life. This is manifest in the delicate elaboration and infinite suggestiveness of his phraseology and style, which is a wonderful combination of simplicity and sublety, in the mingled charm and power of his nicely studied rhythm, and in the development of his characters and mechanism of his plots—so seemingly simple if studied superficially, so increasingly complex and problematical the more familiar we become with them. He is the subtlest and most delicate artist in expression of all those who employed the wonderful language in which he wrote. In the structure and evolution of his plays, his art is not less exquisite and finished, and the *Oedipus Rex* and the *Philoctetes* are probably and in different ways the two most perfect dramas in the world.

But this is not his highest praise. In the depth and comprehensiveness of his insight into life and into human nature and in the steadiness with which he holds the mirror up to both, in his clear perception of the ubiquity and final supremacy of Heaven-appointed law and of the mischief and peril involved in running counter to it, he recalls our own Shakespeare. But while Shakespeare subordinates theology to ethics, Sophocles subordinates ethics to theology. Never did a poet devote his art to loftier purposes. In his hands, as in Pindar's, poetry became the means not merely of ennobling and purifying, but of consecrating life. Of all poets Sophocles is perhaps the most entitled to the epithet divine. The perfect harmony of his exquisitely balanced powers, the serene and luminous intelligence which is the atmosphere in which his genius moves, his lofty transcendentalism, the steadiness and clearness with which he discerns through obscuring accidents the Real and the True, and through change and change the Unchanging and Eternal—these are his characteristics. And therefore it was that Matthew Arnold, speaking of those teachers to whom he owed most, thus expressed himself.

> But be his
> My special thanks whose even-balanc'd soul,
> From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
> Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;
> Who saw life steadily and saw it whole,

The mellow glory of the Attic stage.
Singer of sweet Colonus and its child.

III

Introduction to the Antigone

The Legend.

As the incidents on which the *Antigone* is founded belongs to a story with which no less than five of the extant Greek tragedies deal, and as references to various details in that story abound in this and in other dramas, it may be well to tell it at length.

The founder of the dynasty, to the throne of which Oedipus the father of Antigone succeeded, was Labdacus, king of Thebes. On his death his son Laïus, after certain adventures with which the main story has no concern, came to the throne. In due time he married Jocasta, or Epicaste as Homer calls her, the daughter of Menoeceus and the granddaughter of Pentheus, the successor of Cadmus on the throne of Thebes and celebrated as the opponent of the god Dionysus. His fate is the theme of the *Bacchae* of Euripides. As Laïus and Jocasta were childless, the Oracle at Delphi was consulted, and Laïus was informed that if a son was born to him that son would be his death. Accordingly, on Jocasta afterwards giving birth to a male child, the child,

three days after its birth, was given to a slave belonging to the household of Laïus, that it might be destroyed. Its feet were pierced by an iron pin—hence the name Oedipus, 'swellfoot'—and it was taken to the wilds of Mount Cithaeron. There the slave in charge of it met with a herdsman in the service of Polybus, king of Corinth, and touched with pity for the poor babe gave it to the herdsman, who took it to Corinth. It chanced that Polybus and his wife Merope were childless. Hearing of the baby they took it from the herdsman, adopted it, and passed it off as their own child; and Oedipus, having no knowledge of what had happened, but believing himself to be the son of Polybus and Merope and the heir to the throne of Corinth, grew up to man's estate. One day at a feast a youth heated with wine taunted him with not being the true son of his father. The taunt disturbed him, and he questioned his reputed parents, who assured him that what he had heard was idle slander. Still he was not satisfied, and he determined to consult the Oracle at Delphi. The terrible response was that he was destined to murder his father and become the husband of his mother. This he resolved should never be the case, never again would he enter Corinth—so turning his back on Corinth he took the way to Thebes. On his journey at a narrow place near the Branching Roads in Phocis, he met an old man on a chariot with an escort of four attendants,

a quarrel ensued, and Oedipus slew the old man and three out of the four attendants. That old man was his father Laïus, and the first prophecy was fulfilled. Continuing his journey he entered Thebes. Not long after his arrival there the goddess Hera sent the Sphinx to plague the city. Perched on a hill near it the monster propounded her famous riddle, and every failure to answer that riddle cost the city a life. What none could solve was solved by Oedipus. The Sphinx destroyed herself, and the city, grateful to its saviour, gave him the hand of its queen and made him its king. And so he married his mother, and the second prophecy was fulfilled. Some sixteen years passed by and four children were the fruit of this ghastly and portentous union, two sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene.

At last came the scourge entailed by the crime of which Oedipus had been unwittingly guilty, taking the form of a plague which desolated the city. All came out; detail by detail the frightful story was unravelled. Jocasta hung herself, Oedipus stabbed out his eyes, and blind and degraded and discrowned kept himself secluded in his home till the cry rose that Thebes was harbouring pollution. Then he was expelled and he wandered forth into exile, with his child-daughter Antigone as his sole escort and companion. The fall of Oedipus is the subject of Sophocles' masterpiece the *Oedipus Rex*

or *Oedipus the King*. Meanwhile Creon, the brother of Jocasta and the brother-in-law of Oedipus, governed Thebes as regent, and Eteocles and Polyneices, conscious of the curse which was on themselves and their whole family, were at first content that he should succeed to the kingdom. But as they grew up ambition was awakened in them, and they fell to feud. Eteocles the younger brother persuaded Creon and the citizens of Thebes to banish Polyneices, who as being the elder brother had most right to the throne. Upon that Polyneices took refuge at Argos, where he married the daughter of the king Adrastus, and persuaded Adrastus to join him in invading Thebes. With them were banded five other heroes who have been so magnificently described by Aeschylus in his noble epic drama *The Seven against Thebes*, namely Tydeus, Amphiaraus, Capaneus, Hippomedon and Parthenopaeus. The great conflict is about to begin; the Argive host has gathered before Thebes, but Polyneices, who was like his brother under a curse from their common father for not having resisted those who had expelled him from Thebes, would have that father's forgiveness and blessing before battle is joined. Oedipus has now made his way to Colonus, his weary wanderings soon to be over—the just gods about to recompense him by a glorious death for the calamities and sufferings for which his destiny rather than his own voluntary acts

had been responsible. Antigone and Ismene are with him when the arrival of Polyneices is announced. At first his father refuses to see him. But persuaded by Antigone, in a speech recalling and rivalling in pathos and beauty Portia's appeal to Shylock, he grants the young man an interview, and Polyneices—for he knows that victory will be with that brother on whose side Oedipus shall stand—pours forth his petitions for forgiveness and assistance. The old man listens in silence till Polyneices' passionate appeal is ended; then suddenly turning on him he reiterates the curse which he had years before pronounced on his undutiful and ungrateful sons: victory shall be with neither of them, they shall fall on the field slain by each other's hands. Then Antigone implores Polyneices to abandon his fatal enterprise. This honour forbids; he must go and meet his doom. And so with a parting prayer that they, his sisters, will see that in death he is not dishonoured, but has duly his funeral rites, he disengages himself from their embraces and departs to fulfil his father's curse. All this is related in the *Oedipus at Colonus*. Battle is joined—and here the story is told by Aeschylus in the *Seven against Thebes* and by Euripides in the *Phoenician Women*—the two brothers meet in mortal combat and fall transfixed by each other's spears.

Now, as Eteocles had died defending his native

city against an alien host, he was justly entitled to his funeral rites, and to an honourable burial. But as Polyneices had died while invading his native state at the head of an alien army, and was thus guilty of the greatest crime a citizen could commit, it was decreed that he should be deprived of those rites, and that his body should be left a prey to birds and dogs on the spot where he fell. Such a fate was regarded by the Greeks with peculiar horror. On the reception of funeral rites depended, it was believed, the welfare of the departed in the next world: in this world the deprivation of them marked the extreme of ignominy and dishonour. Even for the murderer of her father and the seducer of her mother, Electra in the frenzy of her hatred can wish nothing worse (*Electra*, 1487–9). At this point the hostility of Ulysses to Ajax relents, and we need go no further than the debate between him and the Atridae at the end of the *Ajax* to realize of what momentous concern to all relatives and friends of the departed the provision of such rites was.

As soon as Antigone hears of this decree, she determines, in defiance of it, to give her brother the rites which the state withholds and forbids. This is related at the conclusion both of the *Seven Against Thebes* and the *Phoenician Women*. The first of these dramas long preceded the *Antigone*; and the concluding dialogue in it between the Herald, the Chorus and Antigone, in which Antigone, half

of the Chorus siding with her, expresses her intention of honouring Polyneices in spite of the warnings of the Herald and of the other half of the Chorus who are against her, probably furnished Sophocles with the hint for his tragedy. At this point the *Antigone* opens. It is early in the morning succeeding the day on which the two brothers had slain each other and on which the Argive army, led by Polyneices, had been routed and driven in panic from Thebes. Creon had succeeded to the throne vacated by Eteocles, and had just issued, apparently on his own responsibility, the decree announcing that Eteocles was to receive honourable burial, but that no one, under pain of death, was to give the corpse of Polyneices funeral rites.

IV

Structure and Plot of the Play

There are several important points of difference between the Greek tragedies and ours. As Greek tragedy sprang from the Choral hymn to Dionysus and was always associated with the cult of that deity, the choric or lyric part always remained an essential and prominent factor in its composition. The Chorus, the number of which in the time of Sophocles was fixed at fifteen, consisted of persons male or female, who were appropriate accompaniments to the action of the drama. They took no

part in the action and in no way affected it. Their function was partly to give lyric expression to the emotions excited or suggested by what occurred in the course of the action, and to draw either by way of commentary or independently the moral or political lessons to be derived from it. In the present play the Chorus consists of Theban elders. In these tragedies there were no acts and scenes, the acts or rather the various stages in the evolution of the plot being indicated by the Choral songs or, as they were technically called, *Stasima*. All that part of the play which preceded the entrance of the Chorus was called the *Prologos*. The first song of the Chorus, sung as they entered from the sides of the Orchestra and took their stand round the altar in the centre, known as the *thymele*, was called the *Parodos*; that portion of the dialogue which intervened between the *Parodos* and the next whole Chorus was called the *first Epeisodion*. This was succeeded by the *first Stasimon*, so named because sung by the Chorus while standing round the *thymele*. *Epeisodia* and *Stasima* thus succeeded each other till the concluding portion of the play began, and that was called the *Exodos* because at its close the Chorus and the actors left the stage. Sometimes the Chorus held musical dialogue with one of the chief actors, and these dialogues had the name of *Kommoi*, an excellent illustration of which we find in this play, lines 808–883, or the Chorus

divided itself in alternate musical discourse. As a rule there was no change of scene, the catastrophe not taking place on the stage but being related by a messenger. In the *Antigone* the scene is an open space before the royal palace at Thebes; what occurs elsewhere—the sprinkling of the dust over the corpse of Polyneices and the arrest of Antigone, her death and the deaths of Haemon and Eurydice—being announced and described by messengers. As a rule, the action is comprised within a revolution of the sun: in the *Antigone* it is comprised within a single day. But no condition was more rigidly observed than what is known as the unity of action, which involved the separation of comedy from tragedy, interdicted underplots and the introduction of anything which did not bear directly on the catastrophe and on the illustration of the central purpose, or which in any way interfered with the solemn and imposing impression which the work as a whole was designed to make. How finely is this illustrated in the *Antigone*! In the opening dialogue we see what is in conflict, civil legislation and human piety, the positive law of the state and the unwritten law of the heart; and never in a single scene or in a single incident does the action swerve from the course prescribed, till the type of the one in the person of Creon illustrates the danger of arrogantly exalting the law of man over the law of nature, and the type of the other in the person

of Antigone, the heavy price which on earth at least must be paid for defying the law of man that a higher law may be obeyed.

Not less important were the aesthetic and moral functions of tragedy, functions which in the hands of Sophocles particularly it most punctiliously regarded. Its aim was, in Aristotle's expression, 'to effect through fear and pity the purgation of those passions.' In other words, it was to excite legitimately those passions, and by legitimately exciting them to relieve and purify them. For this reason the hero or heroine of a tragedy must not be a perfectly bad or a perfectly good person, because if perfectly bad his or her fall excited neither pity nor fear, if perfectly good, mere disgust: consequently the character must be a mixed one, and the sin or error which led its possessor to ruin must not be a base or ignoble one. How entirely the characters of Antigone and Creon fulfil these conditions is obvious and needs no commentary.

It remains to add that the Greek tragedies were always acted at the two great Dionysian Festivals, and particularly at the Greater Dionysia in the Spring of the year, at the public expense. They were produced in competition, and a poet had to compete with no less than four plays, three tragedies, and a farce known as a Satyric Play. These plays might form a sequence, as they do in the case of the Orestean Trilogy of

Aeschylus, but they might be on independent subjects, as they commonly were with Sophocles; indeed, he is said to have introduced the custom of competition with independent plays, but this is doubtful. The *Antigone* was probably brought out at the Great Dionysia in the Spring of B. C. 441; it is not known what were the other plays in the tetralogy to which it belonged. As the play tells its own story, a brief account of the plot, chiefly for the purpose of introducing the characters and for explaining the point of the Choruses, is all that will be requisite.

Prologos (1–100).

The two sisters are introduced, their characters being sharply and elaborately contrasted—Antigone, stern and resolute, possessed and dominated by one idea, the determination to do the duty which affection and piety dictate; Ismene, gentle, timid and feminine. She attempts to dissuade Antigone from an act which will cost her her life, but Antigone rejects such counsel with contempt.

Parodos (101–163).

The Chorus describe the siege of Thebes, the unpatriotic wickedness of Polyneices, the death of the two brothers, the discomfiture of the Argive host, the glorious victory over the enemies of Thebes. The chief point in the Chorus is that it emphasizes the guilt of Polyneices.

First Epeisodion (164–331).

Creon is introduced, and his harsh, stern, tyran-

nical temper, which reminds us of Shakespeare's Angelo, declares itself at once in his first speech. He announces his edict—Eteocles shall be honoured with burial, Polyneices shall not. A watch has been set to see that no one gives the banned one his funeral rites, and death is the penalty for any such attempt. While he is speaking, one of the sentinels appointed to watch the body—this character is one of the few in the Greek tragedies which border closely on comedy, and certainly he reminds us of Shakespeare's clowns—announces that some one has strewn dust over the corpse, thus paying to it the interdicted funeral rites. In the rage he shows, Creon's intemperate character is further displayed; he dismisses the man with threats of a terrible death for himself and for the other guards if the culprit is not discovered.

First Stasimon (332–382).

This beautiful chorus celebrates the wit and works of man, his daring, his inventiveness which, however, can only bring him honour so long as he keeps within the bounds of law—if he breaks those bounds ruin only can result. The application of this to the conduct of Antigone is obvious.

Second Epeisodion (383–581).

The sentinel, re-entering, brings in Antigone, who had been arrested in the act of repeating and completing the forbidden rites. Creon asks her whether what was alleged by the sentinel was

true—she replies that it was. He then asks whether she knew of the edict. She answers that she not only knew of it, but gloried in disobeying it. Then follows the noble speech in which she justifies her act and draws a distinction between laws issued by mere men and the divine unwritten laws which have the sanction of divinity. Creon, incensed that a woman should set him and his laws at defiance, dooms her to death. But suspecting that Ismene also was an accomplice in this defiance of his power, he orders her to be summoned. She enters, and in a singularly pathetic scene pleads that she may share her sister's fate; but Antigone, who had never forgiven her for refusing in her womanly timidity to take part in what should have been a common duty, harshly repels her. Then turning to Creon and reminding him that Antigone was betrothed to his son, she pleads piteously that the life of one who was to have been his daughter-in-law should be spared. But Creon is adamant: Antigone shall die.

Second Stasimon (582–630).

This emphasizes the power of destiny. Woe after woe pursues a doomed family. When from the gods a house is shaken, fails never more the curse. Of the house of Labdacus the two sisters are all that are left; now they too must perish. All powerful is the might of Zeus; impotent the will of man, on whom comes, if the Gods so rule, infatuation and ruin. The application of this

Chorus to the fate of Antigone and, in a measure to the fate of Creon also, is obvious.

Third Epeisodion (631–780).

Haemon, the son of Creon and the betrothed lover of Antigone, now enters. His character is very finely drawn, and the scene which ensues is a masterpiece. Knowing well his father's temper and the relative position in which they stand to each other, he makes no sentimental plea; but, self-controlled and calm, with the utmost deference and in affectionate solicitude for his father's welfare and reputation, he points out to him that the citizens are not with him in the course which he is pursuing, that it is reasonable to listen to the opinion of others, and that to be unbending and inexorable is both unwise and perilous. 'Shall I, grown grey with age, be taught indeed —and by this boy?' thunders Creon in answer. But still Haemon keeps his temper, while Creon with every word he speaks becomes more unreasonable, imperious, and brutal. At last the young man realizes that all pleas are vain, and, the pent-up passion flaming forth uncontrolled, he rushes out to die with her whom he loved. After Haemon's departure Creon now announces the form of death which he had designed for Antigone. She shall be buried alive; but Ismene's life shall be spared, as, on reflection, he is satisfied of her innocence.

Third Stasimon (781–883).

This, one of the most purely beautiful lyrics

which have come down to us from the Greeks, appropriately celebrates the power of love.

Fourth Epeisodion (884–943).

Antigone, surrounded by guards, is on her way to her living tomb. She mourns her fate, and the Chorus, touched with pity, but lamenting the infatuation which constrained her to fatal disobedience, condole with her. Creon, re-entering, chides the guards for delaying her passage, and Antigone, strong in the 'faith that looks through death', takes her final leave of the world.

Fourth Stasimon (944–987).

The fate of Antigone recalls to the Chorus the fate of three others who suffered a similarly cruel imprisonment, and they are commemorated—Danaë, Lycurgus, and Cleopatra.

Fifth Epeisodion (988–1114).

On this scene, the most critical in the play, the catastrophe hinges. The aged prophet Teiresias comes with an urgent warning to the king. The Gods are angry with Thebes; they will give their prophet no sign. The city is polluted, and the cause of the pollution is the fact that the corpse of Polyneices is still lying unburied on the plain: let it be buried at once. Creon treats Teiresias as he had treated Haemon before. He angrily refuses to stultify his edict, and taunts Teiresias with being the corrupt mouthpiece of malcontents among the citizens. Then the prophet tells him that for the living soul whom he has sent to the

tomb, and for the corpse which he is keeping festering on the plain, he shall atone with the life of his own son. Creon is struck with consternation—never has the word of that prophet been found to be false. His will is broken: he will yield: Polyneices shall have his funeral rites, Antigone shall be saved. This sudden change on the part of Creon has been censured as untrue to nature, as violating probability. Nothing could be more true to nature, for nothing is so unstable and fragile as the firmness which is mere obstinacy, the firmness in which reason has no part. Note, however, that while Creon's unseemly and impious altercation with Teiresias was protracted, the time for undoing what he had done had passed.

Fifth Stasimon (1115–1153).

The Chorus, gladdened by Creon's repentance, and anticipating that all will soon be bright and joyous in Thebes, break out into a dance-song in honour of Dionysus. We may here pause to note that Sophocles almost invariably ushers in the catastrophe of his tragedies—it is so in the *Ajax*, in the *Oedipus Rex* and in the *Trachiniae*—by these ironical preludes like bursts of sunlight just before the clouds gather blackest for storm.

Exodos (1154–1353).

A messenger now announces the catastrophe, and while he is telling his terrible story Eurydice, the wife of Creon and the mother of Haemon, enters. As soon as Creon had seen that Polyneices

had had his funeral rites—so punctiliously were they fulfilled that he even stayed to build a mound —he and his attendants had hurried to the tomb in which Antigone had been immured that she might be released. But on breaking into it a fearful spectacle met their view. Antigone had hung herself, and Haemon in frenzy was clinging to her corpse, a double-hilted sword at his side. As soon as the boy saw his father he drew his sword and, spitting in his face, furiously stabbed at him, but missing him, plunged the blade into his own side, and fell dying with his arms round the dead Antigone. Creon then himself enters in an agony of remorse with the body of his son. But the cup of his misery is not yet full. A second messenger announces that Eurydice has stabbed herself, cursing, as she died, the husband who had been responsible for the death of her two sons[1]. Childless, wifeless, and utterly broken with grief and remorse, Creon prays for death, and cold indeed is the comfort the Chorus can proffer him. He is conducted into the palace, and as he leaves the stage the Coryphaeus points the moral of his conduct and of his fate. What is said it may be well to give in a strictly literal version. 'The first and most important element in happiness is wisdom, and towards the Gods reverence must in no way be disregarded: great words on the part of overweening men get as their penalty great blows, and in old age teach wisdom.'

[1] See note on l. 1303 of the play.

V

The Philosophy and Teaching of the Play

Nothing can illustrate more strikingly the real complexity which underlies and is involved in the apparent simplicity of the art of Sophocles than the ethics of this drama. The central purpose is obviously the relation of the law which has its sanction in political authority and the law which has its sanction in the private conscience, the relation of the obligations imposed on human beings as citizens and members of the state, and the obligations imposed on them in the home and as members of families. And both these laws presenting themselves in their most crucial form are in direct collision. Creon was perfectly justified in issuing the edict which deprived Polyneices of his funeral rites. The young man had fallen in the act of committing the most heinous crime of which a citizen could be guilty, and Creon, as the responsible head of the state, very naturally supposed that exemplary punishment was the culprit's rightful due. The decree issued with its annexed penalty became law, and as the law it was incumbent on every citizen to obey it. In the case of Antigone the other law presents itself at the same crucial point. No private obligation was more sacred and more imperative in the eyes of the Greeks than the duty she undertook, and which,

as the last of her race, Ismene excepted, she could delegate to no one else. She had a right to look upon it as a divine commission. She had a right to assert that in defying Creon's edict she was loyal to an unwritten law which had a higher sanction than man's will. Up to this point, then, both are in the right, and neither deserves punishment. Had reason and right feeling ruled Creon, he would have seen that Antigone was perfectly justified in disobeying his edict : had reason ruled Antigone, she would have seen that he was perfectly justified in issuing it. It is not till the interview with Teiresias that Creon transgresses in act and is guilty of sin. He had had no divine intimation before that his edict was displeasing to the Gods and against their will. He is here warned that it is, but he defends it and insults the prophet of the Gods. This is his chief sin, and it is this which leads to his punishment. The terrible calamities, then, which overtake Creon are not the result of his exalting the law of the state over the unwritten and divine law which Antigone vindicates, but are the result of his harsh, imperious and intemperate character. It was his intemperance which made him impervious to the impressions which the conduct and position of Antigone ought to have made on him, which made him deaf to the appeals of Haemon, and which led him to disregard till it was too late the warnings of Teiresias ; it was his intemperance

which was his ruin. This is emphasized by the Chorus in the lines which conclude the play. But if Creon is punished, Antigone is punished also. Does she deserve her fate? Are we to understand that the poet in his moral does not design to represent that the law which she vindicates should supersede the law which Creon vindicates? A careful study of the play will surely show that he leaves the question practically unanswered, or at all events that what can be urged on either side is so nicely balanced that it is difficult to say on which side the scale inclines. It is important to remember that if a poet is a moralist and a teacher he is primarily an artist. Antigone is a noble and pathetic creation, and the poet has lavished on her all that can impress and move us. Of this effect he has been more studious than of the solution of any moral problem. But on what is now in question let us see what light can be thrown. Antigone, it must be remembered, belonged to a doomed family, and her conduct is regarded throughout by the Chorus as an act of infatuation urged on her by the curse resting on that family: it is defended by no one except her lover Haemon. She makes no attempt to conciliate Creon, but maintains throughout a most defiant attitude, glorying alike in her deed and in its penalty. It is indeed difficult to see how Creon, without stultifying his position and his authority, could have acted otherwise than he did. Antigone not

merely braves but courts death. That the Gods did not approve of Creon's treatment of Polyneices may be pleaded in justification of Antigone's act, but this hardly affects the question of her fate. In her case as well as in Creon's, it was not so much what they did, as the temper in which what they did was done, that brought ruin on them.

But from how many different points of view may this most subtly suggestive drama be regarded. It might be plausibly maintained that from the first Creon was wholly in the wrong, and Antigone wholly in the right, which is Jebb's view. It might be maintained that the whole play centres on a beautiful martyr in a beautiful cause, and that Creon is merely the means of bringing about her triumph and apotheosis ; or it might be contended that Sophocles had no moral purpose at all, and that the whole play is merely an exquisite work of art. But this is certain, that it exacts and will repay the minutest and most reverent study. Different students of it will no doubt arrive at different conclusions as to its purpose and motive, but the impression most generally made will probably be that Sophocles has with wonderful ingenuity played round a problem of deep and permanent interest, presented it in different lights, and illustrated the mischief and peril involved or possibly involved in any attempts at its practical solution.

SCHEME OF THE DRAMA

	LINES
Prologos	1–100
Parodos	101–163
Epeisodion I	164–331
Stasimon I	332–382
Epeisodion II . . .	383–581
Stasimon II	582–630
Epeisodion III . . .	631–780
Stasimon III	781–883
Epeisodion IV . . .	884–943
Stasimon IV	944–987
Epeisodion V . .	988–1114
Stasimon V . . .	1115–1153
Exodos	1154–1353

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ANTIGONE, ISMENE } *daughters of Oedipus.*

CREON, *King of Thebes.*

A Watchman.

HAEMON, *son of Creon.*

TEIRESIAS, *the blind prophet.*

A Messenger.

EURYDICE, *the wife of Creon.*

Another Messenger.

CHORUS of Theban Elders.

[SCENE. *An open space before the royal palace at Thebes.*]

ANTIGONE

Enter Antigone and Ismene.

Ant. Ismene, sister mine, one life with me,
Knowest thou of the burden of our race
Aught that from us yet living Zeus holds back?
Nay, for nought grievous and nought ruinous,
No shame and no dishonour, have I not seen
Poured on our hapless heads, both thine and mine.
And even now what edict hath the prince
Uttered, men say, to all this Theban folk?
Thou knowest it and hast heard? or 'scapes thy sense,
Aimed at thy friends, the mischief of thy foes?
Ism. To me of friends, Antigone, no word
Hath come, or sweet or bitter, since that we
Two sisters of two brothers were bereaved,
Both on a day slain by a twofold blow:
And, now that vanished is the Argive host
Ev'n with the night fled hence, I know no more,
If that I fare the better or the worse.
Ant. I knew full well, and therefore from the gates
O' the court I led thee hither, alone to hear.
Ism. There's trouble in thy looks: thy tidings tell.
Ant. Yea, hath not Creon, of our two brothers slain,
Honoured with burial one, disdained the other?
For Eteocles, they say, he in the earth
With all fair rites and ceremony hath laid,
Nor lacks he honour in the world below;
But the poor dust of Polyneices dead
Through Thebes, 'tis said, the edict has gone forth
That none may bury, none make moan for him,
But leave unwept, untombed, a dainty prize

For ravening birds that gloat upon their prey.
So hath our good lord Creon to thee and me
Published, men say, his pleasure—ay, to *me*—
And hither comes, to all who know it not
Its purport to make plain, nor deems the thing
Of slight account, but, whoso does this deed,
A public death by stoning is his doom.
Thou hast it now; and quickly shall be proved
If thou art noble, or base from noble strain.

Ism. O rash of heart, if this indeed be so,
What help in me, to loosen or to bind?

Ant. Consider, toil and pain if thou wilt share.

Ism. On what adventure bound? What wouldst thou do?

Ant. To lift his body, wilt thou join with me?

Ism. Wouldst thou indeed rebel, and bury him?

Ant. My brother I will bury, and thine no less,
Whether thou wilt or no: no traitress I.

Ism. O all too bold—when Creon hath forbid?

Ant. My rights to hinder is no right of his.

Ism. Ah, sister, yet think how our father died,
Wrapt in what cloud of hate and ignominy
By his own sins, self-proved, and both his eyes
With suicidal hand himself he stabbed:
Then too his mother-wife, two names in one,
Fordid with twisted noose her woful life:
Last, our two brothers in one fatal day
Drew sword, O miserable, and each to each
Dealt mutual slaughter with unnatural hands:
And now shall we twain, who alone are left,
Fall like the rest, and worse—in spite of law,
And scorning kings, their edicts and their power?
Oh rather let us think, 'tis not for us,
Who are but women, to contend with men:

And the king's word is mighty, and to this,
And harsher words than this, we needs must bow.
Therefore will I, imploring of the dead
Forgiveness, that I yield but as I must,
Obey the king's commandment: for with things
Beyond our reach 'twere foolishness to meddle.
Ant. I'll neither urge thee, nor, if now thou'dst help
My doing, should I thank thee for thine aid.
Do thou after thy kind: thy choice is made:
I'll bury him; doing this, so let me die.
So with my loved one loved shall I abide,
My crime a deed most holy: for the dead
Longer have I to please than these on earth.
There I shall dwell for ever: be it thine
To have scorned what gods have hallowed, if thou wilt.
Ism. Nay, nothing do I scorn: but, how to break
My country's law—I am witless of the way.
Ant. For thee such plea may serve: I go to heap
The earth upon my brother, whom I love.
Ism. Alas, unhappy, how I fear for thee!
Ant. Fear not for me: guide thine own fate aright.
Ism. Yet breathe this purpose to no ear but mine:
Keep thou thy counsel well—and so will I.
Ant. Oh speak: for much more hatred thou wilt get,
Concealing, than proclaiming it to all.
Ism. This fever at thy heart by frost is fed.
Ant. But, whom I most should please, they most are pleased.
Ism. So wouldst thou: but thou canst not as thou wouldst.
Ant. Why, then, when strength shall fail me, I will cease.
Ism. Not to attempt the impossible is best.
Ant. Hated by me, and hated by the dead—
To him a hateful presence evermore—

Thou shouldst be, and thou shalt be, speaking thus.
But leave me, and the folly that is mine,
This worst to suffer—not the worst—since still
A worse remains, no noble death to die.

Ism. Go if thou wilt: but going know thyself
Senseless, yet to thy friends a friend indeed.

[*Exeunt.*

Chor. (*strophe* 1.)

Lo, the sun upspringing!
Fairest light we hail thee
Of all dawns that on Thebes the seven-gated
Ever broke! Eye of golden day!
Over Dirce's fount appearing,
Hence the Argive host white-shielded,
That in cómplete arms came hither,
Headlong homeward thou didst urge
Faster still with shaken rein.
At call of Polyneices, stirred
By bitter heat of wrangling claims,
Against our land they gathered, and they swooped
Down on us—like an eagle, screaming hoarse,
White-clad, with wings of snow—
With shields a many and with waving crests.

(*antistrophe* 1.)

But above our dwellings,
With his spears that thirsted
For our blood, at each gate's mouth of the seven
Gaping round, paused the foe—and went,
Ere his jaws with blood were sated,
Or our circling towers the torch-flame
Caught and kindled: so behind him
Raged intense the battle-din—
While for life the Serpent fought.
For Zeus the tongue of vaunting pride

Hates with exceeding hate ; he marked
That torrent army's onward flood, superb
With clank of gold, and with his brandished fire
Smote down who foremost climbed
To shout his triumph on our ramparts' heights.
(*strophe* 2.)
Hurled from that height with swift reverse,
The unpitying earth received him as he fell,
And quenched the brand he fain had flung,
And quelled the mad endeavour,
The frantic storm-gusts of his windy hate.
So fared it then with him ;
Nor less elsewhere great Ares dealt
Against the foemen thunderous blows—
Our trace-horse on the right.
For seven chieftains at our seven gates
Met each his equal foe : and Zeus,
Who foiled their onset, claims from all his due,
The brazen arms, which on the field they left :
Save that infuriate pair,
Who, from one father and one mother sprung,
Against each other laid in rest
Their spears, victorious both,
And each by other share one equal death.
(*antistrophe* 2.)
But now of Victory be glad :
She meets our gladness with an answering smile,
And Thebes, the many-charioted,
Hears far resound her praises :
Now then with war have done, and strife forget !
All temples of the gods
Fill we with song and night-long dance ;
And, Theban Bacchus, this our mirth
Lead thou, and shake the earth !

But lo the ruler of this Theban land,
Son of Menoeceus, Creon comes,
Crowned by these new and strange events, he comes—
By will of heav'n our new-created king,
What counsel pondering?
Who by his sovereign will hath now convoked,
In solemn conference to meet,
The elders of the state;
Obedient to whose summons, we are here.

Enter Creon.

Cre. Sirs, it hath pleased the gods to right again
Our Theban fortunes, by sore tempest tossed:
And by my messenger I summoned hither
You out of all the state; first, as I knew you
To the might o' the throne of Laïus loyal ever:
Also, when Oedipus upheld the state,
And when he perished, to their children still
Ye with a constant mind were faithful found:
Now they are gone: both on one fatal field
An equal guilt atoned with equal doom,
Slayers of each other, by each other slain:
And I am left, the nearest to their blood,
To wield alone the sceptre and the realm.
There is no way to know of any man
The spirit and the wisdom and the will,
Till he stands proved, ruler and lawgiver.
For who, with a whole city to direct,
Yet cleaves not to those counsels that are best,
But locks his lips in silence, being afraid,
I held and hold him ever of men most base:
And whoso greater than his country's cause
Esteems a friend, I count him nothing worth.
For, Zeus who seeth all be witness now,

Nor for the safety's sake would I keep silence,
And see the ruin on my country fall,
Nor would I deem an enemy to the state
Friend to myself; remembering still that she,
She only brings us safe: on board of her
Our friends we make—no friends, if she be lost.
So for the good of Thebes her laws I frame:
And such the proclamation I set forth,
Touching the sons of Oedipus, ev'n now—
Eteocles, who fighting for this land
In battle has fall'n, more valiant none than he,
To bury, and no funeral rite omit
To brave men paid—their solace in the grave:
Not so his brother, Polyneices: he,
From exile back returning, utterly
With fire his country and his fathers' gods
Would fain have burnt, fain would with kinsmen's blood
Have slaked his thirst, or dragged us captive hence:
Therefore to all this city it is proclaimed
That none may bury, none make moan for him,
But leave him lying all ghastly where he fell,
Till fowls o' the air and dogs have picked his bones.
So am I purposed: not at least by me
Shall traitors be preferred to honest men:
But, whoso loves this city, him indeed
I shall not cease to honour, alive or dead.

Chor. Creon, son of Menoeceus, 'tis thy pleasure
The friend and foe of Thebes so to requite:
And, whatso pleases thee, that same is law,
Both for our Theban dead and us who live.

Cre. Look to it, then, my bidding is performed.

Chor. Upon some younger man impose this burden.

Cre. To watch the body, sentinels are set.

Chor. What service more then wouldst thou lay on us?
Cre. That ye resist whoever disobeys.
Chor. Who is so senseless that desires to die? 220
Cre. The penalty is death: yet hopes deceive,
And men wax foolish oft through greed of gain.

Enter Sentinel.

Sent. That I come hither, king, nimble of foot,
And breathless with my haste, I'll not profess:
For many a doubtful halt upon the way,
And many a wheel to the right-about, I had,
Oft as my prating heart gave counsel, 'Fool,
What ails thee going into the lion's mouth?'
Then, 'Blockhead, wilt thou tarry? if Creon learns
This from another man, shalt thou not smart?'
So doubtfully I fared, reluctant-slow, 231
And, if the way was short, 'twas long to me.
But to come hither to thee prevailed at last,
And, though the speech be nought, yet I will speak.
For I have come fast clutching at the hope
That nought's to suffer but what fate decrees.
Cre. What is it that hath troubled thus thy mind?
Sent. First for myself this let me say: the deed
I neither did, nor saw who was the doer,
And 'twere not just that I should suffer harm.
Cre. Wisely, thyself in covert, at the mark 241
Thou aimest: some shrewd news, methinks, thou'lt tell.
Sent. Danger to face, well may a man be cautious.
Cre. Speak then, and go thy way, and make an end.
Sent. Now I will speak. Some one ev'n now hath buried
The body and is gone; with thirsty dust
Sprinkling it o'er, and paying observance due.

Cre. How? By what man was dared a deed so rash?
Sent. I cannot tell. No mattock's stroke indeed,
Nor spade's upcast was there: hard was the ground,
Baked dry, unbroken: track of chariot-wheels
Was none, nor any sign who did this thing.
But he who kept the watch at earliest dawn
Showed to us all—a mystery, hard to clear.
Not buried was the dead man, but concealed,
With dust besprinkled, as for fear of sin:
And neither of dog, nor any beast of prey,
That came, that tore the body, found we trace.
Then bitter words we bandied to and fro,
Denouncing each the other; and soon to blows
Our strife had grown—was none would keep the peace—
For every one was guilty of the deed,
And none confessed, but all denied they knew.
And we were fain to handle red-hot iron,
Or walk through fire barefoot, or swear by heaven,
That neither had we done it, nor had shared
His secret with who planned it or who wrought.
So all in vain we questioned: and at last
One spake, and all who heard him, bowed by fear,
Bent to the earth their faces, knowing not
How to gainsay, nor doing what he said
How we might 'scape mischance. This deed to thee
He urged that we should show, and hide it not.
And his advice prevailed; and by the lot
To luckless me this privilege befell.
Unwilling and unwelcome is my errand,
A bearer of ill news, whom no man loves.
Chor. O king, my thought hath counselled me long since,
Haply this deed is ordered by the gods.

Cre. Cease, ere my wrath is kindled at thy speech,
Lest thou be found an old man and a fool.
Intolerably thou pratest of the gods,
That they to yonder dead man have respect.
Yea, for what service with exceeding honour
Sought they his burial, who came here to burn
Their pillared shrines and temple-offerings,
And of their land and of their laws make havoc?
Or seest thou that the gods allow the wicked?
Not so: but some impatient of my will
Among my people made a murmuring,
Shaking their heads in secret, to the yoke
With stubborn necks unbent, and hearts disloyal.
Full certainly I know that they with bribes
Have on these men prevailed to do this deed.
Of all the evils current in this world
Most mischievous is gold. This hath laid waste
Fair cities, and unpeopled homes of men:
Many an honest heart hath the false lure
Of gold seduced to walk in ways of shame;
And hence mankind are versed in villanies,
And of all godless acts have learnt the lore.
But, who took hire to execute this work,
Wrought to their own undoing at the last.
Since, if the dread of Zeus I still revere,
Be well assured—and what I speak I swear—
Unless the author of this burial
Ye find, and in my sight produce him here,
For you mere death shall not suffice, until
Gibbeted alive this outrage ye disclose,
That ye may know what gains are worth the winning,
And henceforth clutch the wiselier, having learnt
That to seek gain in all things is not well.
For from ill-gotten pelf the lives of men

Ruined than saved more often shall ye see.
Sent. May I speak a word, or thus am I dismissed?
Cre. Know'st thou not that ev'n now thy voice offends?
Sent. Do I afflict thy hearing or thy heart?
Cre. Where I am pained, it skills not to define.
Sent. The doer grieves thy mind, but I thine ears.
Cre. That thou wast born to chatter, 'tis too plain.
Sent. And therefore not the doer of this deed.
Cre. At thy life's cost thou didst it, bought with gold.
Sent. Alas!
'Tis pity, men should judge, yet judge amiss.
Cre. Talk you of 'judging' glibly as you may—
Who did this deed, I'll know, or ye shall own
That all your wondrous winnings end in loss.
Sent. With all my heart I wish he may be found:
But found or no—for that's as fortune will—
I shall not show my face to you again.
Great cause I have to thank the gracious gods,
Saved past all hope and reckoning even now.
[*Exeunt Creon and Sentinel.*

Chor. (*strophe* 1.)
Many are the wonders of the world,
And none so wonderful as Man.
Over the waters wan
His storm-vext bark he steers,
While the fierce billows break
Round his path, and o'er his head:
And the Earth-mother, first of gods,
The ageless, the indomitable,
With his ploughing to and fro
He wearieth, year by year:
In the deep furrow toil the patient mules.
(*antistrophe* 1.)
The birds o' the air he snares and takes

All the light-hearted fluttering race :
And tribes of savage beasts,
And creatures of the deep,
Meshed in his woven toils,
Own the master-mind of man.
Free lives of upland and of wild
By human arts are curbed and tamed :
See the horse's shaggy neck
Submissive to the yoke—
And strength untired of mountain-roaming bulls.

(*strophe* 2.)

Language withal he learnt,
And Thought that as the wind is free,
And aptitudes of civic life :
Ill-lodged no more he lies,
His roof the sky, the earth his bed,
Screened now from piercing frost and pelting rain ;
All-fertile in resource, resourceless never
Meets he the morrow ; only death
He wants the skill to shun :
But many a fell disease the healer's art hath foiled.

(*antistrophe* 2.)

So soaring far past hope,
The wise inventiveness of man
Finds diverse issues, good and ill :
If from their course he wrests
The firm foundations of the state,
Laws, and the justice he is sworn to keep—
High in the city, cityless I deem him,
Dealing with baseness : overbold,
May he my hearth avoid,
Nor let my thoughts with his, who does such deeds,
agree !

Re-enter Sentinel, bringing in Antigone.

What strange portentous sight is this,
I doubt my eyes, beholding? This—
How shall I gainsay what I know?—
This maiden *is*—Antigone!
Daughter of Oedipus,
Hapless child of a hapless sire,
What hast thou done? It cannot be
That thou hast transgressed the king's command—
That, taken in folly, *thee* they bring!

Sent. This same is she that did the burial:
We caught her in the act. But where's the king?

Chor. Back from the palace in good time he comes.

Re-enter Creon.

Cre. What chance is this, to which my steps are timed?

Sent. Nothing, sir king, should men swear not to do;
For second thoughts to first thoughts give the lie.
Hither, I made full sure, I scarce should come
Back, by your threats beruffled as I was.
Yet here, surprised by most unlooked-for joy,
That trifles all delights that e'er I knew,
I bring you—though my coming breaks my oath—
This maiden, whom, busied about the corpse,
We captured. This time were no lots to throw:
My own good fortune this, and none but mine.
Now therefore, king, take her yourself and try her,
And question as you will: but I have earned
Full clearance and acquittal of this coil.

Cre. Where, on what manner, was your captive taken?

Sent. Burying the man, we took her: all is told.

Cre. Art thou advised of this? Is it the truth?

Sent. I say I saw her burying the body,
That you forbade. Is that distinct and clear?

Cre. How was she seen, and taken in the act?
Sent. So it fell out. When I had gone from hence
With thy loud threats yet sounding in my ears,
We swept off all the dust that hid the limbs,
And to the light stripped bare the clammy corpse,
And on the hill's brow sat, and faced the wind,
Choosing a spot clear of the body's stench.
Roundly we chid each other to the work;
'No sleeping at your post there' was our word.
So did we keep the watch, till in mid-heaven
The sun's bright burning orb above us hung,
With fierce noon-heat: and now a sudden blast
Swept, and a storm of dust, that vexed the sky
And choked the plain, and all the leaves o' the trees
O' the plain were marred, and the wide heaven it filled:
We with shut eyes the heaven-sent plague endured.
And, when after long time its force was spent,
We saw this maiden, and a bitter cry
She poured, as of a wailing bird that sees
Her empty nest dismantled of its brood:
So she, when she espied the body bare,
Cried out and wept, and many a grievous curse
Upon their heads invoked by whom 'twas done.
And thirsty dust she sprinkled with her hands,
And lifted up an urn, fair-wrought of brass,
And with thrice-poured libations crowned the dead.
We saw it and we hasted, and at once,
All undismayed, our captive, hemmed her round,
And with the two offences charged her there,
Both first and last. Nothing did she deny,
But made me glad and sorry, owning all.
For to have slipped one's own neck from the noose
Is sweet, yet no one likes to get his friends
In trouble: but my nature is to make

All else of small account, so I am safe.
Cre. Speak thou, who bendest on the earth thy gaze,
Are these things, which are witnessed, true or false?
Ant. I say I did it; I deny it not.
Cre. So, sirrah, thou art free; go where thou wilt,
Loosed from the burden of this heavy charge.
But tell me thou—and let thy speech be brief—
The edict hadst thou heard, which this forbade?
Ant. I could not choose but hear what all men heard.
Cre. And didst thou dare to disobey the law?
Ant. Nowise from Zeus, methought, this edict came,
Nor Justice, that abides among the gods
In Hades, who ordained these laws for men.
Nor did I deem *thine* edicts of such force
That they, a mortal's bidding, should o'erride
Unwritten laws, eternal in the heavens.
Not of to-day or yesterday are these,
But live from everlasting, and from whence
They sprang, none knoweth. I would not, for the breach
Of these, through fear of any human pride,
To heaven atone. I knew that I must die:
How else? Without thine edict, that were so.
And if before my time, why, this were gain.
Compassed about with ills, who lives, as I,
Death, to such life as his, must needs be gain.
So is it to me to undergo this doom
No grief at all: but had I left my brother,
My mother's child, unburied where he lay,
Then I had grieved; but now this grieves me not.
Senseless I seem to thee, so doing? Belike
A senseless judgment finds me void of sense.
Chor. How in the child the sternness of the sire
Shows stern, before the storm untaught to bend!

Cre. Yet know full well that such o'er-stubborn wills
Are broken most of all, as sturdiest steel,
Of an untempered hardness, fresh from forge,
Most surely snapped and shivered should ye see.
Lo how a little curb has strength enough
To tame the restive horse: for to a slave
His masters give no licence to be proud.
Insult on insult heaped! Was't not enough
My promulgated laws to have transgressed,
But, having done it, face to face with me
She boasts of this and glories in the deed?
I surely am the woman, she the man,
If she defies my power, and I submit.
Be she my sister's child, or sprung from one
More near of blood than all my house to me,
Not so shall they escape my direst doom—
She and her sister: for I count her too
Guilty no less of having planned this work.
Go, call her hither: in the house I saw her
Raving ev'n now, nor mistress of her thoughts.
So oft the mind, revolving secret crime,
Makes premature disclosure of its guilt.
But this is hateful, when the guilty one,
Detected, thinks to glorify his fault.

Ant. To kill me—wouldst thou more with me than this?

Cre. This is enough: I do desire no more.

Ant. Why dost thou then delay? I have no pleasure
To hear thee speak—have not and would not have:
Nor less distasteful is my speech to thee.
Yet how could I have won myself a praise
More honourable than this, of burying
My brother? This from every voice should win
Approval, might but fear men's lips unseal.
But kings are fortunate—not least in this,

That they may do and speak what things they will.
Cre. All Thebes sees this with other eyes than thine.
Ant. They see as I, but bate their breath to thee.
Cre. And art thou not ashamed, from them to differ?
Ant. To reverence a brother is not shameful.
Cre. And was not he who died for Thebes thy brother?
Ant. One mother bore us, and one sire begat.
Cre. Yet, honouring both, thou dost dishonour him.
Ant. He in the grave will not subscribe to this.
Cre. How, if no less thou dost revere the guilty?
Ant. 'Twas not his slave that perished, but his brother.
Cre. The enemy of this land: its champion he.
Ant. Yet Death of due observance must not fail.
Cre. Just and unjust urge not an equal claim.
Ant. Perchance in Hades 'tis a holy deed.
Cre. Hatred, not ev'n in death, converts to love.
Ant. Not in your hates, but in your loves, I'd share.
Cre. Go to the shades, and, if thou'lt love, love there:
No woman, while I live, shall master me.

Enter Ismene.

Chor. See, from the palace comes Ismene—
Sisterly drops from her eyes down-shedding:
Clouded her brows droop, heavy with sorrow;
And the blood-red tinge of a burning blush
Covers her beautiful downcast face.
Cre. Thou, who hast crept, a serpent in my home,
Draining my blood, unseen; and I knew not
Rearing two pests, to overset my throne;
Speak—wilt thou too confess that in this work
Thou hadst a hand, or swear thou didst not know?
Ism. I'll say the deed was mine, if she consents:
My share of the blame I bear, and do not shrink.
Ant. Justice forbids thy claim: neither didst thou

Agree, nor I admit thee to my counsels.
Ism. I am not ashamed, in thine extremity,
To make myself companion of thy fate.
Ant. Whose was the deed, know Hades and the dead:
I love not friends, who talk of friendliness.
Ism. Sister, disdain me not, but let me pour
My blood with thine, an offering to the dead.
Ant. Leave me to die alone, nor claim the work
Thou wouldst not help. My death will be enough.
Ism. What joy have I to live, when thou art gone?
Ant. Ask Creon that: thou art of kin to him.
Ism. Why wilt thou grieve me with thy needless taunts?
Ant. If I mock thee, 'tis with a heavy heart.
Ism. What may I do to serve thee even now?
Ant. Look to thyself: I grudge thee not thy safety.
Ism. And may I not, unhappy, share thy death?
Ant. Thou didst make choice to live, but I to die.
Ism. Might I unsay my words, this were not so.
Ant. Wise seemed we—thou to these, and I to those.
Ism. But now our fault is equal, thine and mine.
Ant. Take heart to live: for so thou dost: but I—
Dead is my life long since—to help the dead.
Cre. One of these two, methinks, proves foolish now;
The other's folly with her life began.
Ism. Nay, for, O king, misfortunes of the wise
To madness turn the wisdom that they have.
Cre. 'Tis so with thee, choosing to share her guilt.
Ism. How should I live alone, without my sister?
Cre. Call her not thine: thou hast no sister now.
Ism. But wilt thou tear her from thy son's embrace?
Cre. Are there no women in the world but she?
Ism. Not as their faith was plighted, each to each.
Cre. An evil wife I like not for my son.
Ant. Haemon! beloved! hear not thy father's scorn.

Cre. Thou and thy love to me are wearisome.
Chor. Wilt thou indeed snatch from thy son his bride?
Cre. 'Tis death that will unloose their marriage-bond.
Chor. It seems thou art resolved that she must die?
Cre. Of that we are agreed. Delay no more:
Ye, servants, lead them in. For from this time
Women they needs must be, and range no more:
Since ev'n the bold may play the runaway,
When death he sees close-creeping on his life.
[*Antigone and Ismene are led into the palace.*
Chor. (*strophe* 1.)
Happy indeed is the life of the man who tastes not of trouble!
For when from the gods a house is shaken,
Fails nevermore the curse,
On most and on least of the race descending:
Like to a rolling wave,
By furious blasts from the Thraceward driven—
Out of the nethermost deeps, out of the fathomless gloom,
Casting up mire and blackness and storm-vext wrack of the sea—
And back, with a moan like thunder, from the cliffs the surf is hurled.
(*antistrophe* 1.)
So from of old to the Labdacid race comes sorrow on sorrow:
And, ev'n as the dead, so fare the living:
Respite from ills is none,
Nor one generation redeems another—
All will some god bring low.
Now o'er the last root of the house, fate-stricken,
Woe for the light that had shined, woe for the lingering hope!

Smooth over all is lying the blood-stained dust they
have spread—
Rash speech, and a frantic purpose, and the gods
who reign below.

(*strophe* 2.)

What human trespass, Zeus,
May circumscribe thy power,
Which neither sleep o'ercomes,
That saps the strength of all things else,
Nor months that run their tireless course,
But thou for ever with an ageless sway
The dazzling splendour dost possess
Of thine Olympian home?
'Tis now as it hath ever been,
And still in years to come
The old order will not change:
Never from human life departs
The universal scourge of man,
His own presumptuous pride.

(*antistrophe* 2.)

Hope wings her daring flight,
By strong winds borne afar—
And some are blessed; and some
Are cheated of their vain desires,
That learn their folly all too late,
When in the fire they tread with scorchèd feet.
'Twas said of old—and time approves
The wisdom of the saw—
That, when in foolish ways, that end
In ruin, gods would lead
A mortal's mind astray,
Evil that man miscalls his good:
A brief while then he holds his course
By fatuous pride unscathed.

See, thy son Haemon comes hither, of all
Thy children the last. Comes he lamenting
The doom of the maiden, his bride Antigone—
And the frustrated hope of his marriage?

Enter Haemon.

Cre. Soon we shall know, better than seers could say.
My son, in anger art thou come to me,
Hearing the sentence, not to be reversed,
Which on thy destined bride I have pronounced?
Or am I still thy friend, do what I may?
Haem. Father, I am in thy hand: with thy wise counsels
Thou dost direct me; these I shall obey.
Not rightly should I deem of more account
The winning of a wife than thy good guidance.
Cre. Be this thy dearest wish and next thy heart,
In all things to uphold thy father's will.
For to this end men crave to see grow up
Obedient children round them in their homes,
Both to requite their enemies with hate,
And render equal honour to their friends.
Whoso begets unprofitable children,
What shall be said of him, but that he gets
Grief for himself, loud laughter for his foes?
Never, my son, let for a woman's sake
Reason give way to sense, but know full well
Cold is the pleasure that he clasps, who woos
An evil woman to his board and bed.
What wounds so deeply as an evil friend?
Count then this maiden as thine enemy,
Loathe her, and give her leave, in that dark world
To which she goes, to marry with another.
For out of all the city since I found

Her only, and her openly, rebellious,
I shall not to the city break my word,
But she shall die. Let her appeal to Zeus,
And sing the sanctity of kindred blood—
What then? If in my own house I shall nurse
Rebellion, how shall strangers not rebel?
He who to his own kith and kin does right,
Will in the state deal righteously with all.
Of such a man I shall not fear to boast,
Well he can rule, and well he would obey,
And in the storm of battle at his post
Firm he would stand, a comrade staunch and true.
But praise from me that man shall never have,
Who either boldly thrusts aside the law
Or takes upon him to instruct his rulers,
Whom, by the state empowered, he should obey,
In little and in much, in right and wrong.
The worst of evils is to disobey.
Cities by this are ruined, homes of men
Made desolate by this; this in the battle
Breaks into headlong rout the wavering line;
The steadfast ranks, the many lives unhurt,
Are to obedience due. We must defend
The government and order of the state,
And not be governed by a wilful girl.
We'll yield our place up, if we must, to men;
To women that we stooped, shall not be said.

Chor. Unless an old man's judgment is at fault,
These words of thine, we deem, are words of wisdom.

Haem. Reason, my father, in the mind of man,
Noblest of all their gifts, the gods implant,
And how to find thy reasoning at fault,
I know not, and to learn I should be loth;
Yet for another it might not be amiss.

But I for thee am vigilant to mark
All that men say, or do, or find to blame.
Thy presence awes the simple citizen
From speaking words that shall not please thine ear,
But I hear what they whisper in the dark,
And how the city for this maid laments,
That of all women she the least deserving
Dies for most glorious deeds a death most cruel,
Who her own brother, fall'n among the slain,
Left not unburied there, to be devoured
By ravening dogs or any bird o' the air: —
'Should not her deed be blazoned all in gold?'
Upon the darkness still such whisper grows.
But I of all possessions that I have
Prize most, my father, thy prosperity.
Welldoing and fair fame of sire to son,
Of son to sire, is noblest ornament.
Cleave not, I pray thee, to this constant mind,
That what thou sayest, and nought beside, is truth.
For men who think that only they are wise,
None eloquent, right-minded none, but they,
Often, when searched, prove empty. 'Tis no shame,
Ev'n if a man be wise, that he should yet
Learn many things, and not hold out too stiffly.
Beside the torrent's course, of trees that bend
Each bough, thou seest, and every twig is safe;
Those that resist are by the roots uptorn.
And ships, that brace with stubborn hardihood
Their mainsheet to the gale, pursue their voyage
Keel-uppermost, their sailors' thwarts reversed.
Cease from thy wrath; be not inexorable:
For if despite my youth I too may think
My thought, I'll say that best it is by far

That men should be all-knowing if they may,
But if—as oft the scale inclines not so—
Why then, by good advice 'tis good to learn.

Chor. What in thy son's speech, king, is seasonable
'Tis fit thou shouldst receive: and thou in his:
For there is reason in the words of both.

Cre. Shall I, grown grey with age, be taught indeed—
And by this boy—to think what he thinks right?

Haem. Nothing that is not right: though I am young,
Consider not my years, but how I act.

Cre. Is this thine act—to honour the unruly? 730

Haem. Wrongdoers, dishonour—outrage, if thou wilt!

Cre. Hath not this maiden caught this malady?

Haem. The general voice of Thebes says no to that.

Cre. Shall Thebes prescribe to me how I must govern?

Haem. How all too young art thou in speaking thus!

Cre. Whose business is't but mine how Thebes is governed?

Haem. A city is none, that to one man belongs.

Cre. Is it not held, the city is the king's? 738

Haem. Finely thou'dst rule, alone, a land dispeopled!

Cre. It seems this boy will plead the woman's cause.

Haem. Woman art thou? my care is all for thee.

Cre. Shameless—is't right to wrangle with thy father?

Haem. I see that wrong for right thou dost mistake.

Cre. Do I mistake, to reverence my office?

Haem. What reverence, heaven's honours to contemn?

Cre. O hateful spirit, ruled by a woman's will!

Haem. To no base service shalt thou prove me bound.

Cre. Art thou not pleading all the time for her?

Haem. For thee and me, and for the gods below.

Cre. Thou shalt not marry her, this side the grave. 750

Haem. If she must die, she shall: but not alone.
Cre. Art grown so bold, thou dost fly out in threats?
Haem. What threats, to argue with a foolish purpose?
Cre. Thou'lt rue—unwise—thy wisdom spent on me.
Haem. Thou art my father; or wise I scarce had called thee.
Cre. Slave—to thy mistress babble, not to me.
Haem. Wouldst thou have all the talking for thine own?
Cre. Is't come to this? But, by Olympus yonder,
Know well, thou shalt be sorry for these taunts,
Wherewith thou dost upbraid me. Slaves, what ho!
Bring that abhorrence hither, that she may die,
Now, in her bridegroom's sight, whilst here he stands.
Haem. Neither in my sight—imagine no such thing—
Shall she be slain; nor shalt thou from this hour
Look with thine eyes upon my face again:
To friends who love thy madness I commit thee.
[*Exit Haemon.*
Chor. Suddenly, sire, in anger he is gone:
Young minds grow desperate, by grief distemper'd.
Cre. More than a man let him conceive and do;
He shall not save these maidens from their doom.
Chor. Both sisters art thou purposed to destroy?
Cre. Not her whose hands sinned not; thou askest well.
Chor. What of the other? how shall she be slain?
Cre. By paths untrodden of men I will conduct her,
And shut her, living, in a vault, rock-hewn,
And there, with food, no more than shall suffice
To avert the guilt of murder from the city,
To Hades, the one god whom she reveres,
She, praying not to die, either shall have
Her asking, or shall learn, albeit too late,

That to revere the dead is fruitless toil.

[*Exit Creon.*

Chor. (*strophe.*)

O Love, our conqueror, matchless in might,
Thou prevailest, O Love, thou dividest the prey;
In damask cheeks of a maiden
Thy watch through the night is set.
Thou roamest over the sea;
On the hills, in the shepherds' huts, thou art;
Nor of deathless gods, nor of short-lived men,
From thy madness any escapeth.

(*antistrophe.*)

Unjust, through thee, are the thoughts of the just,
Thou dost bend them, O Love, to thy will, to thy spite.
Unkindly strife thou hast kindled,
This wrangling of son with sire.
For great laws, throned in the heart,
To the sway of a rival power give place,
To the love-light flashed from a fair bride's eyes:
In her triumph laughs Aphrodite.

Me, even now, me also,
Seeing these things, a sudden pity
Beyond all governance transports:
The fountains of my tears
I can refrain no more,
Seeing Antigone here to the bridal chamber
Come, to the all-receiving chamber of Death.

Enter Antigone surrounded by guards.

Ant. Friends and my countrymen, ye see me
Upon the last of all my ways
Set forth, the Sun-god's latest light
Beholding, now and never more:

But Death, who giveth sleep to all,
Yet living leads me hence
To the Acherontian shore,
Of marriage rites amerced,
And me no bridal song hath ever sung,
But Acheron will make of me his bride.
Chor. Therefore renowned, with praise of men,
To yonder vault o' the dead thou goest,
By no slow-wasting sickness stricken,
Nor doomed to fall with those who win
The wages of the swords they drew,
But mistress of thyself, alive,
Alone of mortals the dark road
To deathward thou shalt tread.
Ant. I heard of one, most piteous in her ending,
That stranger, child of Phrygian Tantalus,
On heights of Sipylus enclasped,
And ivy-like enchained,
By clinging tendrils of the branching rock,
Who day and night unceasingly
'Mid drizzle of rain and drift of snow
Slow-wasting in her place
Stands, as the tale is told,
Her lids surcharged with weeping, and her neck
And bosom drenched with falling of her tears: —
A fate most like to hers
Seals up with sleep these eyes of mine.
Chor. She was a goddess, sprung from gods:
Mortals, of mortal birth, are we.
But for one dead to win with those
Who rank no lower than the gods —
Living and, after, when she died —
An equal lot, were much to hear.
Ant. Ah, I am mocked! Nay, by our fathers' gods,

Withhold thy taunts till I am gone—
Gone and evanished from thy sight.
O Thebes, my city!
O wealthy men of Thebes!
But *ye* will witness—yes, to you I turn—
O fount Dircaean, and this sacred grove
Of Thebè the fair-charioted,
By what stern law, and how of friends unwept,
To that strange grave I go,
The massy dungeon for my burial heaped.
O luckless wight,
Exiled from earth nor housed below,
Both by the living and the dead disowned!

Chor. To furthest brink of boldness thou didst stray,
And stumbling there, at foot of Justice' throne,
Full heavily, my daughter, hast thou fallen:
Yet of thy father's fault belike
This suffering pays the price.

Ant. Thou hast touched, ev'n there, my bitterest pang of all,
A thrice-told tale, my father's grief—
And all our grievous doom that clung
About the famed Labdacidae.
O that incestuous bed
Of horror, and my father's sin—
The hapless mother who bore him to the light,
By him enclasped—wherefrom I luckless sprang:
With whom, accurst, unwedded,
I must go hence to dwell.
O brother, a bride ill-starred
Who to thy couch didst win,
How, being dead, me living thou hast slain!

Chor. Religion prompts the reverent deed:
But power, to whomso power belongs,

Must nowise be transgressed ; and thee
A self-willed temper hath o'erthrown.
Ant. Unwept and unfriended,
Cheered by no song Hymenaeal—
Lo, I am led, heavy-hearted,
This road that awaits me.
The sacred light-giving eye in heaven
Now no more must I see, unhappy :
But for my fate not a tear falls,
Not a friend makes moan.

Re-enter Creon.

Cre. Know ye not, songs and weepings before death
That none would pretermit, were he allowed ?
Hence with her, hence, and tarry not, but deep
In her tomb-prison, even as I have said,
Leave her alone, forsaken : to die, or else
Live, in that vault entombed, if so she will :
Since of this maiden's blood our hands are clean,
Only we ban her sojourn in the light.
Ant. O tomb ! O nuptial chamber ! O house deep-delved
In earth, safe-guarded ever ! To thee I come,
And to my kin in thee, who many an one
Are with Persephone, dead among the dead :
And last of all, most miserably by far,
I thither am going, ere my life's term be done.
But a good hope I cherish, that, come there,
My father's love will greet me, yea and thine,
My mother—and thy welcome, brother dear :
Since, when ye died, I with mine own hands laved
And dressed your limbs, and poured upon your graves
Libations ; and like service done to thee

Hath brought me, Polyneices, now to this.
Yet well I honoured thee, the wise will say:
Since not for children's sake would I, their mother,
Nor for my husband, slain, and mouldering there,
Have travailed thus, doing despite to Thebes.
According to what law, do I speak this?
One husband slain, another might have been,
And children from another, losing this;
But, father and mother buried out of sight,
There can be born no brother any more.
Such was the law whereby I held thee first
In honour; but to Creon all mistaken,
O dear my brother, I seemed, and overbold—
And now, made captive thus, he leads me hence
No wife, no bride for ever—of marriage-joy
And nursery of children quite bereft:
So by my friends forsaken I depart,
Living, unhappy, to dim vaults of death.
Yet I transgressed—what ordinance of heaven?
Why to the gods, ill-fated, any more
Should I look up—whom call to succour—since
Impiety my piety is named?
But, if these things are pleasing to the gods,
I'll freely own I suffered for my fault;
If theirs the fault, who doomed me, may to them
No worse befall than they unjustly do!

Chor. Stormily still o'er the soul of the maiden
The selfsame gusts of passion sweep.

Cre. Therefore, I warn them, ruth for their lingering,
To those who lead her, this shall cause.

Ant. Short shrift, swift death—ah! woe is me—
This speech portends.

Cre. Lay to thy soul no flattering hope,
That unfulfilled this doom may be.

Ant. O country of Thebes and my father's city,
And gods my progenitors,
Lo, how they lead me—now, and delay not.
O all ye princes of Thebes, behold me—
Of the race of your kings, me, sole surviving—
What things at the hands of what men I suffer,
For the fear of the gods I feared.

[*Exit Antigone.*

Chor. (*strophe* 1.)
Out of the sunlight so,
In brass-bound prison-courts,
Were pent the limbs of Danaë,
And in a living tomb sealed up from sight;
Albeit, O daughter, she as thou
Came of a noble line,
And that life-quickening treasure of his golden rain
She had in charge from Zeus to keep.
O dread mysterious power of fate,
That neither wealth nor war can quell,
Nor walls shut out, nor ships escape,
Dark-fleeing o'er the foam!

(*antistrophe* 1.)
And that Edonian king
Was bound, the choleric son
Of Dryas, splenetive and hot,
Fast in the rock by Dionysus chained.
Such fierce and fevered issue streams
From madness at the height.
With splenetive rash speech what madness had assailed
The vengeful god, too late he learned.
To women-worshippers inspired
Their torchlit revels he forbade,
And flutings that the Muses loved

Had silenced with his scorn.

(*strophe* 2.)

From the dark rock-portals of the divided sea
Here go the cliffs of Bosporus, and there
The savage Thracian coast
Of Salmydessus, where the neighbour-worshipped God
Of Battle saw the blinding blow accurst,
Dealt by that fierce stepdame,
Darkling descend on both the sons
Of Phineus—on their sightless orbs
That plead for vengeance, stricken through and stabbed
By the sharp shuttle in her murderous hands.

(*antistrophe* 2.)

Wasted with their sorrow, their mother's hapless fate
They hapless wept, and in their mother's shame
Had part, as those base-born:
Yet she from the old Erechtheid blood her birth derived,
And in deep caverns of the hills was nursed,
Amid her father's storms,
Child of the North-wind—up the steep
Hillsides no bounding foal so fleet,
A daughter of the gods: but her, O child,
Fate's everlasting hands availed to reach.

Enter Teiresias, a boy leading him.

Teir. Princes of Thebes, we come—one sight for both
Our common road descrying, as behoves
Blind men to find their way by help of others.

Cre. What tidings, old Teiresias, dost thou bring?

Teir. Hear then the prophet, and attend his speech.

Cre. Have I aforetime from thy wisdom swerved?

Teir. So, clear of shoals, thou pilotest the state.
Cre. The service thou hast rendered I attest.
Teir. Once more on razor's edge thy fortunes stand.
Cre. Hearing thy speech, I shudder: tell me more.
Teir. My art's prognostications hear and judge.
For in my ancient seat, to watch the birds
In that their general gathering-place, I sat,
And heard an unintelligible noise,
A cry and clangour of birds, confused with rage;
And what fierce fray they waged with murderous claws,
I guessed too surely by the whir of wings.
Scared by that sound, burnt-offerings I then
Essayed on blazing altars; but no flame
Leapt from the sacrifice; a clammy ooze
Reeked from the thighs, and 'mid the ashes dripped,
Smoking and sputtering; the gall disparted,
And on the air was spent; and the thighbones
Of the enfolding fat fell stripped and bare.
This from this boy I heard, whose eyes beheld
The failing signs of sacrifice obscure:
Others by me are guided, I by him.
And by thy will we are afflicted thus.
For now our hearths and altars every one
Have ravening dogs and birds fouled with the flesh
Of this poor fallen son of Oedipus;
And so no flame of victims burnt may move
Gods any more to hearken to our prayers,
And birds obscene flap thence their bodeful cries,
With fat of human carrion newly gorged.
Slight not, my son, such warning. For all men,
Both great and small, are liable to err:
But he who errs no more unfortunate
Or all unwise shall be, if having tripped
He rights the wrong nor stubbornly persists.

He who persists in folly is the fool.
Give death his due : stab not the fallen foe :
What valour is in this, to slay the slain?
Wisely I speak and well; and sweet it is
To hear good counsel, when it counsels gain.
Cre. Old man, ye all, as bowmen at a mark,
Shoot at this man, and now with soothsaying
Ye practise on me—ye by whose sort long since
Mere merchandise and salework I am made.
Go to, get gain, and barter, if ye will,
Amber ye buy from Sardis, and fine gold
Of Ind: but him, I say, ye shall not bury:
No, not if eagles, ministers of Zeus,
Should bear him piecemeal to their Master's throne,
Will I, for fear of such pollution, grant
Leave for his burial; knowing well that men
Soil not the stainless majesty of heaven.
But, aged seer, the wisest of mankind
Dishonourably may fall, who fairly speak
Dishonourable words, and all for gain.
Teir. Alas!
Who knows, or who considers, in this world—
Cre. What wilt thou say? What commonplace is this?
Teir. How prudence is the best of all our wealth?
Cre. As folly, I suppose, our deadliest hurt.
Teir. Yet with this malady art thou possest.
Cre. Reproaches I'll not bandy with the prophet.
Teir. Saying that I falsely prophesy, thou dost.
Cre. So are all prophets; 'tis a covetous race.
Teir. Greed of base gain marks still the tyrant-sort.
Cre. Knowest thou that of thy rulers this is said?
Teir. I know; for thou through me didst save the state.
Cre. Wise in thy craft art thou, but false at heart.
Teir. Secrets, fast-locked, thou'lt move me to disclose.

Cre. Unlock them, only speaking not for gain.
Teir. So, for thy part indeed, methinks I shall.
Cre. Think not that in my purpose thou shalt trade.
Teir. But surely know that thou not many more
Revolving courses of the sun shalt pass,
Ere of thine own blood one, to make amends,
Dead for the dead, thou shalt have rendered up,
For that a living soul thou hast sent below,
And with dishonour in the grave hast lodged,
And that one dead thou holdest here cut off
From presence of the gods who reign below,
All rites of death, all obsequies denied—
With whom thou shouldst not meddle, nor the gods
In heaven, but of their due thou robb'st the dead.
Therefore of Hades and the gods for thee
The Avengers wait, with ruin slow yet sure,
To take thee in the pit which thou hast dug.
Do I speak this for gold? Thyself shalt judge:
For, yet a little while, and wailings loud
Of men and women in thy house shall show.
Think, of each city too what gathering rage,
That sees its mangled dead entombed in maws
Of dogs and all fierce beasts, or borne by kites
With stench unhallowed to its hearth-crowned heights.
So like a bowman have I launched at thee
In wrath, for thou provok'st me, shafts indeed
To pierce thy heart, and fail not, from whose smart
Thou'lt not escape. But now, boy, lead me home,
That he may vent his spleen on younger men,
And learn to keep a tongue more temperate,
And in his breast a better mind than now.
[*Exit Teiresias.*
Chor. The man has prophesied dread things, O king,
And gone: and never have I known—not since

These temples changed their raven locks to snow—
That aught of false this city heard from him.
Cre. Yea, this I know, and much am I perplexed:
For hard it is to yield, but standing firm
I fear to pluck swift ruin on my pride.
Chor. Son of Menoeceus, be advised in time.
Cre. Say then, what must I do? and I'll obey.
Chor. Go, from her prison in the rock release
The maiden, and the unburied corpse inter.
Cre. Dost thou think this, and wouldst thou have me yield?
Chor. Yea, king, and quickly; for the gods cut short
With sudden scathe the foolishness of men.
Cre. Hardly indeed, but yet with forced consent
I'll do it, stooping to necessity.
Chor. Do it, and go; leave not this task to others.
Cre. Even as I am, I'll go; and, servants, haste,
That hear and hear me not: axes in hand,
All to yon spot, far-seen, make good your speed.
But I, since this way now my mind is bent,
Whom I myself have bound, myself will loose.
For now my heart misgives me, he lives best,
Whose feet depart not from the ancient ways.
[*Exit.*

Chor. (*strophe* 1.)
Worshipped by many names—
Glory of Theban Semele,
Child of loud-thundering Zeus—
Haunting the famed Italian fields,
Whom as a prince the hospitable vale
Of the Eleusinian Dame reveres—
Bacchus, that hast thy home
In Thebes, the home of Bacchanals,
Beside Ismenus' fertile stream,

Where the fell dragon's teeth of old were sown :
(*antistrophe* 1.)
O'er the two-crested peak,
With nymphs Corycian in thy train,
By springs of Castaly,
The streaming levin lights thy path :
And from steep Nysa's hills, with ivy clad,
And that green slope, with clustering grapes
Empurpled to the sea,
When thou wouldst visit Theban streets,
A jocund company divine
With acclamation loud conducts thee forth,
(*strophe* 2.)
Thebes of all cities most thou honourest,
Thou with thy mother, whom the lightning slew :
And now, when Thebes is sick,
And all her people the sore plague hath stricken,
Hear us and come with healing feet
O'er the Parnassian hill,
Or the resounding strait :
(*antistrophe* 2.)
Come, whom fire-breathing stars in dance obey,
The master of the voices of the night,
Of Zeus the puissant son—
Come at our call, girt with thy Thyiad troop,
That follow, with thy frenzy filled,
Dancing the livelong night,
Iacchus, thee their lord.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. Neighbours of Cadmus, and the royal house
Of old Amphion, no man's life would I,
How high or low soever, praise or blame,
Since, who to-day has fortune, good or ill,

To-morrow's fortune lifts or lays him low;
No seer a constant lot foresees for men.
For Creon before was happy, as I deemed,
Who saved this land of Cadmus from its foes,
And the sole sovereignty of Thebes receiving
Prospered therein, with noble children blest.
Now all is lost. For, when the joys of life
Men have relinquished, no more life indeed
I count their living, but a living death.
For in thy house heap riches, if thou wilt;
Keep kingly state; yet, if no joy withal
Thou hast, for all things else, compared with pleasure,
I would not change the shadow of a smoke.

Chor. Of what grief now of princes wilt thou tell?

Mess. That one lies dead, whom those who live have slain.

Chor. Say, who is slain? And what man is the slayer?

Mess. Haemon is dead: his death no stranger's act.

Chor. Slain by himself, or by his father's hand?

Mess. Wroth with his pitiless sire, he slew himself.

Chor. O prophet, how thy prophecy comes true!

Mess. These things being so, consider of the rest.

Chor. Lo, hard at hand the miserable queen,
Eurydice: who from the house comes forth
Either by chance, or hearing of her son.

Enter Eurydice.

Eur. Good townsmen all, your conference I heard,
As to the doors I came, intending now
Of Pallas to entreat her heavenly aid.
Even as I loosed the fastenings of the gate,
That opened wide, there smote my ears a word
Of sorrow all my own: backward I swooned,
Surprised by terror, in my maidens' arms:
But tell me now your tidings once again—

For, not unlearned in sorrow, I shall hear.
Mess. Dear mistress, I will tell thee what I saw,
And not leave out one word of all the truth.
Why should I flatter thee with glozing words,
Too soon found false? Plain truth is ever best.
Thy husband hence I followed at the heels
To that high plain, where torn by dogs the body
Of Polyneices lay, unpitied still.
A prayer we said to Hecate in the way
And Pluto, their displeasure to refrain,
Then, sprinkling with pure water, in new-stript boughs
Wrapped round and burned the fragments that remained.
A lofty funeral-mound of native earth
We heaped for him; then sought the maiden's bed,
Her bridal bed with Hades in the rock.
And from afar a voice of shrill lament
About the unhallowed chamber some one heard,
And came to Creon, and told it to his lord,
And in his ears, approaching, the wild cry
Rang doubtfully, till now there brake from him
A word of sharp despair, 'O wretched man,
What fear is at my heart? and am I going
The wofullest road that ever I have gone?
It is my son's voice greets me. Good servants, go,
Go nearer quickly; and standing by the tomb,
Even to the throat of the vault peer through and look,
Where the wrenched stone-work gapes, if Haemon's voice
I recognise indeed, or by the gods
Am cheated!' Crazed with his fear, he spake; and we
Looked, as he bade; and in the last of the tomb
We saw the maiden—hanged: about her neck
Some shred of linen had served her for a noose

And fallen upon her, clasping her, he lay,
Wailing his wasted passion in the grave,
His fatal father, and his luckless bride.
His father saw, and crying a bitter cry
Went in, and with a lamentable voice
Called him, 'O rash, what is it that thou hast done?
What wouldst thou? On what madness hast thou rushed?
My son, come forth: I pray thee—I implore.'
But with fierce eyes the boy glared at his sire
And looks of loathing, and for answer plucked
Forth a two-hilted sword, and would have struck,
But missed him, as he fled: and in that minute,
Wroth with himself, in his own side amain
Thrust deep the steel, unhappy; and conscious still
Folded the maiden in his fainting arms;
Then, gasping out his life in one sharp breath,
Pelted her pale cheek with the crimson shower.
Dead with the dead he lies, such nuptial rites
In halls of Hades, luckless, having won;
Teaching the world, that of all human ills
With human folly is none that may compare.

Chor. How should one deem of this? The queen, without [*Exit Eurydice.*
A word, of good or evil, has gone hence.

Mess. Indeed, 'tis strange: but yet I feed on hope
That to lament in public for her son
She will not deign; but, as for private sorrow,
Will charge her women in the house to weep.
She is well tried in prudence, not to fail.

Chor. I know not; but to me the too-much silence,
No less than clamorous grief, seems perilous.

Mess. I will go hence to the house, and know, if aught
Of secret purpose in her raging heart

She hath kept locked from us. Thou sayest well:
The too-much silence may bode mischief too.
[*Exit Messenger.*

Chor. Lo, the king comes hither himself, in his hands
The record, not doubtful its purport, bearing;
No grief (I dare to say) wrought by another,
But the weight of his own misdoing.

Enter Creon with the body of Haemon.

Cre. (*strophe.*)
Alas my purblind wisdom's fatal fault,
Stubborn, and fraught with death!
Ye see us, sire and son,
The slayer and the slain.
O counsels all unblest!
Alas for thee, my son,
So young a life and so untimely quenched—
Gone from me, past recall—
Not by thy folly, but my own!

Chor. Ah, how too late thou dost discern the truth!

Cre. Yea, to my cost I know: but then, methinks,
Oh then, some god with crushing weight
Leapt on me, drave me into frantic ways,
Trampling, alas for me,
In the base dust my ruined joy.
O toil and trouble of mortals—trouble and toil!

Enter second Messenger.

Sec. Mess. Trouble, O king, thine own and none but thine,
Thou comest, methinks, part bearing in thy hands;
Part—in the house thou hast, and soon shalt see.

Cre. What more, what worse than evil, yet remains?

Sec. Mess. Thy wife is dead, with desperate hand ev'n now

Self-slain, for this dead son for whom she lived.
Cre. (*antistrophe.*)
O harbour of Hades, never to be appeased,
Why art thou merciless?
What heavy news is this?
Harsh news to me of grief,
That slays me, slain before!
Ah me, the woful news!
What sayest thou, what latest word is this?
Slaughter on slaughter heaped—
Slain both together, son and wife!
Chor. Behold and see: for now the doors stand wide.
Cre. This second grief, ah me, my eyes behold.
What fate, ah what, remains behind?
My son I hold already in my arms:
And now, ah woe is me,
This other in my sight lies dead:
Mother and child—most piteous both to see!
Sec. Mess. Heartstricken at the altar as she fell,
She vailed her swooning eyelids, wailing loud
For Megareus, her son, who nobly died
Before, and for this other, and with her last
Breath cursed, the slayer of her children, thee.
Cre. Ah me, will no one aim
Against my heart, made wild with fear,
With two-edged sword a deadly thrust?
O wretched that I am,
Fulfilled with sorrow, and made one with grief!
Sec. Mess. She did reproach thee, truly, ere she died,
And laid on thee the blame of both their deaths.
Cre. What was the manner of her violent end?
Sec. Mess. Pierced to the heart, by her own hand, she died,
Hearing her son's most lamentable fate.

Cre. All, all on me this guilt must ever rest,
And on no head but mine.
O my poor son, I slew thee, even I :
Let no one doubt but that the deed was mine.
O servants, lead me quickly, lead me hence ;
And let me be as one who is no more.
Chor. 'Tis counselled well, if well with ill can be :
For bad is best, when soonest out of sight.
Cre. I care not, let it come :
Let come the best of all my fate,
The best, the last, that ends my days :
What care I ? come what will—
That I no more may see another day.
Chor. Let be the future : mind the present need,
And leave the rest to whom the rest concerns.
Cre. No other wish have I ; that prayer is all.
Chor. Pray not at all : all is as fate appoints :
'Tis not in mortals to avert their doom.
Cre. Oh lead me hence, unprofitable ; who thee
Unwittingly have slain,
Child, and my wife, unhappy ; and know not now
Which way to look to either : for all things
Are crooked that I handle, and a fate
Intolerable upon my life hath leapt.
[*Creon is led away.*
Chor. First of all happiness far is wisdom,
And to the gods that one fail not of piety.
But great words of the overweening
Lay great stripes to the backs of the boasters :
Taught by adversity,
Old age learns, too late, to be wise.
[*Exeunt.*

NOTES

PAGE 1, 2. **the burden of our race,** the woes that fell upon the royal house of Thebes on account of the curse that Pelops had laid upon Laïus, the father of Oedipus. Hence Oedipus unwittingly killed his father and married his mother, Jocasta. See Introduction.

7. **the prince,** Creon, Jocasta's brother, who had become king of Thebes on the death of the sons of Oedipus.

13. **two brothers,** Eteocles and Polyneices, the two sons of Oedipus, who slew each other, when the Argive host that came to restore Polynices made its unsuccessful assault upon the seven gates of Thebes.

16. **with the night.** The Argive host had fled on the preceding night. See Introduction.

29. **unwept, untombed.** Compare *Hamlet*, i. 5. 77: 'Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled.

PAGE 2, 36. **death by stoning.** This was a form of death usually inflicted on those who as traitors incurred a public curse.

51. **his own sins.** See note on l. 2.

self-proved. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* we read how Oedipus, by insisting on the detection of Laïus' murderer in his cross-examination of a man privy to the secret, detected his own guilt and how, overcome with horror at the discovery, he put out his eyes with the brooch of his 'mother-wife'. Jocasta hanged herself. For all this see *Oedipus the King*, 1237 seqq.

55. **one fatal day,** the day of the Argive assault. See note on l. 13.

PAGE 3, 71. **after thy kind,** according to thy nature.

74. **My crime a deed most holy.** This is what is called an oxymoron; cf. Pope's 'pious fraud', and Horace's 'splendide mendax'. Jebb quotes Milton, *Tetrachordon*, 'men of the most renowned virtue have sometimes by transgressing most truly kept the law.'

88. The original literally translated means 'thou hast a hot heart for chilling deeds', or 'under chilling circumstances'; the first meaning either that Antigone is burning with excitement to do a deed the thought of which makes Ismene's heart turn cold with fear, or the thought of which should make Antigone's heart turn chill with fear; the second, 'you are hot and excited when you ought to be cool and cautious.'

PAGE 4, 101. **Lo, the sun.** As the scene was at daybreak there is particular propriety in this address to the sun, and if we could suppose that the play was acted at this time, as it may have been, there is more.

103. **Thebes the seven-gated,** as distinguished from the hundred-gated Egyptian Thebes.

104. **Eye of golden day,** the sun, called the 'eye of heaven' in Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet, and again in *Richard II*, i. 3. 275, 'All places that the eye of heaven visits.'

105. **Dirce's fount** was to the *west* of Thebes; but, as Campbell remarks, the re-turning army saw the sunlight on the river as they crossed back into the city.

106. **white-shielded.** The Argive warriors are described as bearing a white shield because it was the national colour of Argos, the word itself meaning white.

114. **White-clad.** See l. 106.

124. **the Serpent,** identical with the 'fell dragon' of l. 1125. This monster was killed by Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, and the warriors that sprung from its teeth were the ancestors of the Thebans. So it represents the Theban army.

PAGE 5, 131. **who foremost.** Capaneus, one of the doughtiest and most arrogant of the Seven Chiefs, is meant. See Introduction.

138. **Ares,** the God of War, the Roman Mars.

140. **Our trace-horse on the right.** Ares, the God of War, is so called because he gave the victory to the Thebans. In the four-horse chariot race the result

of the contest depended mostly on the trace-horse on the right, because all the corners were turned to the left.

145. **that infuriate pair,** Eteocles and Polyneices.

153. **Theban Bacchus.** See ll. 1116-1125.

PAGE 6, 171. **equal guilt,** inasmuch as they were both fratricides. In other respects Creon does not attribute equal guilt to them. See ll. 192-210.

PAGE 7, 185-6. This passage, a somewhat ambiguous one in the original, is usually explained, as Jebb explains and translates it, 'I would not be silent if I saw ruin instead of safety coming to the citizens,' but Mr. Whitelaw, agreeing with Donaldson, contends that it means 'I would not keep silence because of fear' (i. e. to save myself) 'if I saw ruin coming to the citizens', or, as Donaldson paraphrases it, Creon would not purchase his own safety by winking at that which would bring mischief on the citizens: he is opposing the individual safety to the public ruin.

204. **none may bury.** The Greeks considered want of burial the greatest calamity, as excluding a man's ghost from admission to the other world. The great question debated in the latter half of the *Ajax* of Sophocles is whether Ajax shall be buried or not, and in this play Antigone prefers to die rather than allow her brother to be unburied. See Introduction.

PAGE 8, 242. **shrewd,** evil.

245. **buried.** In l. 255 the sentinel says he was 'not buried'. From a ceremonial point of view, he was buried, although he had not been interred in a grave. For admission to the other world the sprinkling of a little dust with due libations (see l. 431) over the body sufficed. This is all that Archytas asks in Horace's ode (*Carm.* I. xxviii):

Oh, then, though speed thou must,
It asks brief tarrying—thrice with kindly dust
Bestrew my corpse, and then press onward as thou wilt.
(Martin's version.)

PAGE 9, 262. **was guilty** in the opinion of the others.

264. **handle red-hot iron**, to prove their innocence. If they were innocent, it was supposed that the iron would not burn their hands nor the fire their feet. Similar ordeals were practised in ancient India and mediaeval Europe.

277. **A bearer of ill news**, cf. 2 *Henry IV*, i. 1. 100–1:

> The first bringer of unwelcome news
> Hath but a losing office.

A sentiment repeated in *Ant. and Cleop.* ii. 5. 85–6.

PAGE 12, 370. **cityless**, no true citizen, unworthy of the name of citizen.

PAGE 13, 393. **trifles**, beggars, reduces to insignificance.

PAGE 14, 424. **as of a wailing bird.** Compare the beautiful passage in Virgil's Fourth *Georgic*, 511 seqq.: 'Even as the nightingale mourning under the poplar shade bewails her lost young, whom some cruel ploughman has noted and torn unfledged from the nest: but the livelong night she weeps, and, seated on the bough, keeps repeating her pitiable strain and fills the places round with her mournful dirge.'

431. **thrice-poured**, i.e. with libations of milk, wine and honey.

PAGE 15, 451. **Nor Justice**, &c. A personification of the just claims of the infernal deities for the funeral offerings and ceremonies that they have ordained.

452. **Hades** here and in l. 521 means the lower world; in ll. 542 and 1205 it means the God who rules over the lower world.

455. With this sublime passage cf. *Oedipus the King*, 865 seqq. 'Those laws of range sublime called into life through the high clear heaven, whose father is Olympus alone: their parent was no race of mortal men; no, nor shall oblivion ever lay them to sleep: a mighty God is in them and he grows not old' (Jebb's version).

PAGE 16, 486. **Be she my sister's child**, cf. *Rich. II*, i. 1. 116:

> Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom's heir,—
> . . . . . .
> Such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood
> Should nothing privilege him, nor partialize
> The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.

PAGE 17, 513. **One mother**, Jocasta.
one sire, Oedipus.

521. **Perchance**, &c., perhaps in the lower world it is considered holy to give funeral honours to the unjust as well as to the just.

526-30. Imitated by Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, 726-31:

> Yet on she moves, . . . but now, with head declin'd
> Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps,
> And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,
> Wetting the borders of her silken veil.

531-2. **A serpent—draining.** So Shakespeare's Richard II (*Rich. II*, iii. 2. 131) calls the rebels

> Snakes, in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart.

PAGE 18, 557. **those**, Hades and the dead.

572. This line belongs to Ismene in the MSS. Jebb and most modern editors, following the Aldine edition, assign it to Antigone, Jebb remarking that 'this solitary reference to her love heightens in a wonderful degree our sense of her unselfish devotion to a sacred duty'. Surely more may be said for assigning it with the MSS. to Ismene, but the question cannot be discussed here.

PAGE 19, 579. **Women they needs must be**, they must be compelled to behave like women and not have liberty to wander. Women in ancient Greece were kept in a state of almost oriental seclusion, and it was not considered womanly to go much out of doors.

589. **from the Thraceward.** The poet speaks as an Athenian who had taken his stand on the east coast of Attica and looked towards Euboea while a violent gale was blowing from the north-east. It would first touch

the surface of the sea, but at length would so affect the whole mass of water that the windward coast of Euboea, no less than the lee-shore of Attica, would be lashed by the waves.

593. **the Labdacid race,** the race of Labdacus, the father of Laius. What the Chorus means is that there is no cessation from woes to the race of Labdacus; on each generation are they accumulated.

PAGE **20,** 603. **What human trespass,** thy power of punishing trespasses can be restrained by no human being.

610. **Olympian home.** Zeus was supposed to have his palace on the summit of Olympus, a mountain on the frontiers of Thessaly and Macedonia.

620. **said of old,** by some wise man of olden time; possibly the reference may be to Theognis. That time approves the saw is shown by its repetition in the well-known Latin form *Quem vult Deus deperdere dementat prius,* for the origin and extraordinary pedigree of which see King's *Classical and Foreign Quotations*, p. 298. For the sentiment cf. Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, 1675 seqq.:

> Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent,
> Who hurt their minds,
> And urg'd them on with mad desire
> To call in haste for their destroyer.

625. **miscalls his good,** as Satan does in *P. L.* iv. 110: 'Evil, be thou my good.'

626. **A brief while.** Compare Psalms xxxvii. 35, 36.

PAGE **24,** 726. **thou in his,** thou, Haemon, shouldst receive what is seasonable in thy father's speech.

741. 'No. My care is for thee, and thou art not a woman.'

PAGE **25,** 752. **threats.** Creon thought his life was threatened by his son, who was really expressing his resolve to die with Antigone.

757. **Olympus,** heaven, the abode of the Gods. See note on l. 610, and compare *Othello*, iii. 3. 460: 'By yond marble heaven.'

760. **abhorrence,** abhorred person. The abstract is used for the concrete, as in *P. L.* i. 406: 'Chemos, the obscene dread of Moab's sons.'

PAGE **26,** 781 seqq. **O Love, our conqueror.** With this Chorus may be compared Scott's homelier, more commonplace address to the same power:

> In peace, Love tunes the shepherd's reed:
> In war, he mounts the warrior's steed:
> In halls, in gay attire is seen:
> In hamlets, dances on the green.
> Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
> And men below and saints above;
> For love is heaven, and heaven is love.
>
> *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Cant. iii. 11–17.

800. **Aphrodite** is the Greek name for the goddess of love. 'Aphros' means 'foam', as she is fabled to have sprung from the foam of the sea.

PAGE **27,** 815. **Acheron,** one of the rivers of hell given with their meanings in *P. L.* ii. 577–86.

825. **That stranger,** Niobe. Her children were killed by Apollo and Artemis, and she was turned into stone. On Mount Sipylus near Smyrna was a rock, which from a distance looked like a woman weeping, and was supposed by the Greeks to be the stone image into which Niobe was transformed. As Niobe having married Amphion was a kinswoman of Antigone the reference to her has point.

PAGE **28,** 845. **fount Dircaean.** See note on l. 105.

860. **A thrice-told tale.** See Introduction.

862. **Labdacidae.** See note on l. 593.

869. **a bride ill-starred.** Polyneices married the daughter of Adrastus, king of Argos, who therefore consented to lead an Argive army against Thebes.

PAGE **29,** 877. **song Hymenaeal,** wedding song. 'Hymen' or 'Hymenaeus' originally meant the wedding song and afterwards the god of marriage.

894. **Persephone,** Proserpine, wife of Hades. See Tennyson's *Demeter.*

PAGE 30, 905. **Since not for children's sake.** This and the following lines, though quoted by Aristotle, are suspected of being an interpolation on account of the strange way in which they limit the sentiment of duty so grandly expressed in ll. 450–60, as if it only applied to the case of a dead brother whose parents were also dead. The same curious reason is more appropriately given in Herodotus, iii. 119, by a Persian woman for preferring to save the life of her brother rather than her husband and children.

As this story may possibly have been the origin of the passage in the text, it may be well to give the important part of it: 'When all had been seized and put in chains'—that is the conspirators against Darius—'as malefactors condemned to death, the wife of Intaphernes came and stood continually at the palace gates, weeping and wailing so. So Darius after a while seeing that she never ceased to stand and weep was touched with pity for her, and bade a messenger go to her, and say, "Lady, king Darius gives thee as a boon the life of one of thy kinsmen, choose which thou wilt of the prisoners." Then she pondered awhile before she answered, "If the king grants the life of one alone I make choice of my brother." Darius when he heard the reply was astonished and sent again, saying, "Lady, the king bids thee tell him why it is that thou passest by thy husband and thy children and preferrest to have the life of thy brother spared. He is not so near to thee as thy children nor so dear as thy husband." She answered, "O king, if the Gods will I may have another husband and other children when these are gone. But as my father and my mother are no more it is impossible that I should have another brother. That was my thought when I asked to have my brother spared."' *Herodotus*, iii. 119 (Rawlinson's Version).

The whole passage in the *Antigone* is so utterly out of keeping with the rest of the heroine's character and with the reasons before assigned by her for her conduct, that

Goethe expressed a hope that some scholar would prove it to be spurious. See his *Conversations with Eckermann*, *sub* March 28, 1827. Jebb, in his edition of the *Antigone*, Appendix, pp. 257-61, observes, 'Goethe's wish can never be fulfilled. No one will ever convince every one that this passage is spurious. But every student of the *Antigone* is bound to reflect earnestly on this vital problem of the text—the answer to which must so profoundly affect our conception of the great drama as a whole.' He himself is decidedly of opinion that lines 904-920 are spurious. Mr. Whitelaw, on the other hand, sees no reason to doubt their genuineness, and justifies them thus: 'A lost brother cannot be replaced: he is precious therefore not only to his sister, but to his race, precious in life and no less claiming special honour in death. It is evident that throughout this scene Antigone is no longer at the heroic pitch." See notes to his translation of Sophocles, second ed., p. 443.

927. **theirs** refers to Creon and those who agree with him.

933. **Short shrift** implies swift death, as shrift is the confession of sins and absolution by which a Roman Catholic prepares for death. Compare *Richard III*, iii. 4. 97: 'Make a short shrift, he longs to see your head!'

Page 31, 942. **What things.** The double interrogative is a Greek construction.

946. **Danaë**, the mother of Perseus, imprisoned in a brazen tower because it had been foretold that she would have a son who would kill her father. See Kingsley's *Heroes*.

955. **that Edonian king.** Lycurgus, son of Dryas, king of the Edonians, a Thracian people. He was a persecutor of Bacchus, and there are various legends about the punishments inflicted on him for this persecution. After he had been driven mad for his impiety the Edonians were commanded by an oracle to imprison him in a cave on Mount Pangaeus in Macedonia.

957. **Dionysus,** Bacchus.

PAGE **32,** 966. **the dark rock-portals** are the small rocky islands which divide the Bosporus from the Euxine Sea. They were called Cyaneae (dark blue) on account of their colour, and are famous in the story of the Argo.

969. **Salmydessus** was a town on the Thracian coast, sixty miles north-west of the Cyaneae.

neighbour-worshipped God, Ares worshipped by the neighbouring Thracians. Compare the description in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, ll. 1113–6 :

> of the grisly place,
> That highte the grete temple of Mars in Trace,
> In thilke colde frosty regioun,
> Ther-as Mars hath his sovereyn mansioun.

971. **that fierce stepdame,** Eidothea, who became the wife of Phineus after he had put away Cleopatra. She put out with a shuttle the eyes of the two sons of Phineus, who was himself punished by the Gods with blindness. See *P. L.* iii. 36.

981. **she,** Cleopatra, whose mother Oreithyia was daughter of Erechtheus. Cleopatra's father was Boreas, the North-wind. The Greeks seem to have derived the same comfort from the legends of their mythology as the Hebrews and Christians derive from the Old and New Testaments. They continually refer to them for solace in misfortune.

988. **one sight,** the eyesight of the attendant who led him. The story of how he became blind is told in Tennyson's *Tiresias.*

PAGE **34,** 1034. **this man,** me.

1038. **Amber.** The Greek word, so translated, here really means a natural alloy of silver and gold found in the mines of Tmolus near Sardis, and called by Herodotus white gold.

1039. **Of Ind.** India was anciently famous for its gold. Herodotus says that Darius received 360 talents of gold

dust as tribute from the part of India included in his empire.

1041. **their Master's throne,** the throne of Zeus.

Page **35,** 1076. **The Avengers,** the Erinyes or Eumenides, Gods who punished men for murder and other heinous crimes.

Page **36,** 1109. **That hear and hear me not,** present and absent.

1115. **many names.** Jebb notes that upwards of sixty titles given to him can be enumerated. Most of the Greek Gods had a great variety of names.

1117. **Semele,** the mother of Bacchus was the daughter of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes.

1120. **the hospitable vale,** the valley that received so many strangers at the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries.

1121. **the Eleusinian Dame.** Demeter, who with Bacchus was worshipped at Eleusis in Attica.

1123. **the home of Bacchanals.** Thebes was the chief centre of the worship of Bacchus. The establishment of his worship there is celebrated in one of the finest plays of Euripides, the *Bacchae.*

Page **37,** 1125. **dragon's teeth.** See note on l. 124.

1127. **the two-crested peak,** the famous two peaks of Parnassus from between which issues the fountain of Castaly, which was the holy water of the Delphian temple in which Apollo, Horace (*Odes* iii. iv. 61–2) tells us, delighted to lave his locks, and which was celebrated for its purificatory virtue.

1131. **Nysa's hills,** in Euboea.

1144. **the resounding strait,** Euripus, that separates Euboea from Boeotia.

1150. **Thyiad troop.** The Thyiades were female votaries of Bacchus, his attendant nymphs.

1155. **Amphion,** Niobe's husband, who, with his brother Zethus, built the Theban wall.

Page **38,** 1162. **land of Cadmus,** Thebes. See note on l. 124.

1185. **Pallas,** Athene, identified with the Roman Minerva.

PAGE **39,** 1199. **Hecate,** a goddess of the lower world, sometimes identified with Artemis: she haunted the places where roads meet, and so is sometimes called Trioditis. She is invoked with Pluto as representing the Deities of the nether world.

1200. **Pluto,** another name for Hades.

1205. **Hades.** See note on l. 452.

PAGE **40,** 1244-5. **without a word.** Compare *Macbeth*, iv. 3. 210:

> Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.

PAGE **42,** 1284. **harbour of Hades,** the lower world, which receives all men at the end of the voyage of life. It is 'never to be appeased' because it is never satisfied and always demands new victims.

1295. **my eyes behold.** At this point the palace doors are thrown open and the dead body of Eurydice is revealed in the background.

1302. **vailed,** lowered.

1303. **Megareus.** This was a son of Creon, who had already perished under the following circumstances: while the Argives were pressing Thebes hard Creon and Eteocles sent for the prophet Teiresias, who announced that the War-God was wroth because Cadmus in old times had slain the dragon which had its lair outside Thebes, and that unless one of the race of Cadmus would consent to die that wrath would never be appeased. Upon that Megareus, Creon's son, or, as he is called by Euripides and the Roman poet Statius, Menoeceus, rushed to the top of a tower on the walls, cut his throat, and threw himself into the Dragon's den beneath. See Tennyson's *Tiresias* for the story.

Printed in England at the Oxford University Press

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